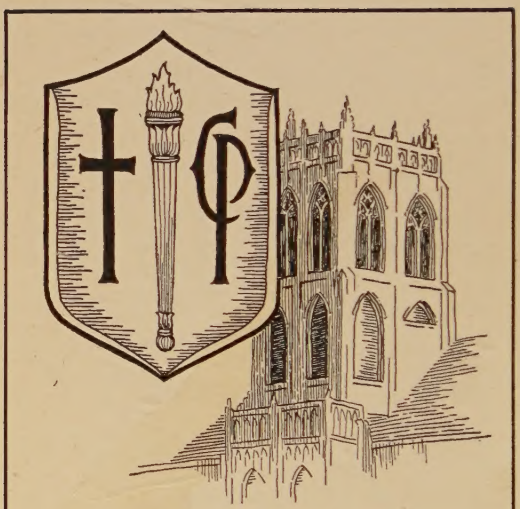

COLLEGE
OF THE PACIFIC

SHADOWS ON THE PALATINE

College of the Pacific
Stockton, Calif.

SHADOWS ON THE PALATINE

BY

WILFRANC HUBBARD

NEW YORK
MINTON, BALCH & COMPANY
1925

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, GLASGOW

TO

SENATOR

COMMENDATORE GIACOMO BONI

IN MEMORY OF MANY YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP
AND MANY HAPPY DAYS ON THE
PALATINE

28360

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I

PAN AND THE LIZARD

PAN AND THE LIZARD

THE haze of midday heat lingered on the Palatine where the chequered shadow of Ilexes scarcely tempered the July sun. High in a leafy shrine sat Pan, moss grown, mutilated, and yet preserving some semblance of his ancient grace and kindly majesty. Below him a little Lizard, narrowly escaped from the heavy tread of a passing gardener, gasped and blinked with quick emotion. "Thanks to thee, O God," panted the Lizard. "Thanks to thee, O Saviour."

"What God do you thank, Lizard?" said a deep voice behind him.

The Lizard turned swiftly, ready for flight. Emboldened by the immobility and benevolent gaze of the enquirer he regained his usual impudence.

"Apollo, the Saviour, to what other God should a Lizard pray?" he answered.

"What! Apollo the Lizard Slayer?"

"Oh!" cried the Lizard, swelling with indignation; "That old calumny! Believe me, Pan, there is a little faith to be put in the tales of men, and in those of Greeks none at all."

" I have heard that not much faith can be put in the tales of lizards," rejoined Pan, " but of course a person of such wisdom and experience as yourself must always command my belief. Tell me for what reasons do you worship Apollo ? "

" For many, but chief among all for the kindly rays of sun, for the glowing air, for the warm stones that tempt the foolish flies. We lizards are not ungrateful though we cannot sing our praise to God as do the grasshoppers. And see the folly of man ; because the grasshopper is always greeting the God with noisy hymns, man esteems him sacred to Apollo, and never thinks of the other lowly worshipper who in quiet thankfulness basks in the sun's rays, lifting his adoring head towards the glory. But so it is ; the silent and the humble are overlooked and forgotten, save by the great Gods, whose eyes shine on all alike. For they have a care for all and give a place to all upon our Mother Earth." The Lizard paused to lick up in quick succession the incautious flies that had ventured within reach of his darting tongue.

" Doubtless, the flies also are grateful for their place," remarked Pan. " I like your contented soul. But see, here comes a friend of yours, the crow that is sacred to Apollo. What is the matter, Lizard ? "

A shadow flickered twice across the path and was gone. Only a rustle of dry grass showed where a trembling lizard had taken refuge. Slowly, very slowly, he crept back into the sunshine, his alert eyes bright with alarm and slender body trembling with quick-drawn breaths.

" Is it gone ? " he quavered.

" The crow ? yes it is gone. Have you no better welcome for your fellow-worshipper, Apollo's bird ? "

" I fear it. It is the terror, from which all lizards flee. Tell me, Pan, you who are wise beyond all others, why is fear born with our lives ? This green world is so full of joy and pleasure when the winter cold is past and the lizard stretches once more his stiffened limbs in the sun rays. Then suddenly from the bright sky falls fear. Better the dark dumb night of winter sleep and its safety than the awful shadow that haunts one's sunny days, and clutches at one's heart. No ! No ! forgive me, Apollo ! Better is the world of sunshine even at the cost of fear. But how beautiful, how good life would be if there were no crows. For my part I wonder how the gods let live such ugly fowls."

" So I have heard flies complain that their world was too full of lizards."

" Flies complain ? You are jesting, Pan ! "

" Nay ! for why should not the flies also find the riddle of life hard to solve. But for you there can be no riddle. A lizard who can descend to the shades and hold converse with the dead must know all things. It is I who should ask for instruction."

" Oh ! mock me not with the foolish legends of men. You know that I have not seen the underworld, though I would gladly venture even there if I might learn something of its wisdom."

" What need to venture if the dead return ? "

" Is it true then that the stone has been taken away and the pit is open once more ? A brother

lizard, that lives not far from here, told me that the keeper of these gardens had found the ancient passage to the world below and set free the shades again. But I paid little heed to him. Is it so ? Have you seen the returning shades ?"

" I have seen them. I have seen many things, since the Greek who first fashioned me set me among the grey olives on the Athenian Hill. I have journeyed with Greeks to the distant Nile and seen great lizards wearing rings of gold. I came to Rome and lived with kings and shepherds, and have seen Emperors made and unmade, proud palaces rise and fall upon this Palatine, temples thronged with priests that are now but scattered stones. I have known many men, many rulers, and many Gods ; I have outlived even the Gods, for mine is the only worship that is remembered still. Many, many generations of men have I seen, living and dead ; and heard their discourse, living and dead ; and what wisdom there is both of the living and the dead that is known to me also. And this is my belief,—that none is wise and but few are happy, and that those are happiest who still cherish Pan in their hearts. Child of all the Gods, Pan has outlived them all."

" But do the shades return ? " persisted the Lizard.

" Mundus patet ! the world is open to the shades and they return if they will. Listen to them if you will, but not for wisdom's sake. There is no gain in knowledge, new or ancient, that comes of man. Look where their temples lie, broken and crumbled ; crumbled and faded are their beliefs also. Only one temple stands

untouched and undecayed ; the temple of Pan whose arches span the lofty trees, whose roof stretches from hill top to hill top. Roofed by the eternal sky, walled by the everlasting mountains the temple of Pan stands where it ever did, and his worship goes on for ever in birth and life and death, and in birth and life again. The ordered flocks that pasture in the peaceful valleys, the wild beasts that haunt the forest glades and rocky mountain-sides, shepherds and shepherdesses, huntsmen and villagers, all feel the power of Pan. And his praise continues and his hymn is heard wherever the solitary pipe calls the wandering herds or the baffled lover, clutching hollow reeds in pursuit of the fleeing nymph, finds solace in the music of their moaning stems. What need have these of other knowledge ? Feeling me, they feel all that is necessary to wisdom. But, if it is your wish, come forth when the night is darkest and listen to the shades as they whisper here amidst their ancient haunts, and learn that man is at least immortal in his foolishness. Farewell ! "

The Lizard looked up and saw but a mass of broken stone. Ran sideways and looked again, and saw no change. Pattered to and fro in the sunshine, turning now and then to look back, but Pan made no sign of life. Then he sought shelter in a friendly crevice and gave himself up to other thoughts.

The long afternoon waned with its lengthening shades. Caligula's towering walls flushed golden rose in the rays of the setting sun ; all gold and rose showed the portico of the Divine Faustine and the broken columns of the Forum.

Then fading rose turned to grey, and the sharp lines of sculptured cornice grew blurred and faint in the failing light. Dark shadows gathered under trees and walls and lifted to meet the lowering gloom of the sky. Night fell, and silence, save for the distant rumour of city life. But on the Palatine all was still, Peace and Darkness, unbroken. The voice of the city dwindled as the hours passed and midnight approached ; then was heard no more.

. . . . . .

A breath of wind stirred the leaves of the grove, and gently swept away the black mantle of night, giving place to a pale glimmer that was not dawn. The air grew light with a dim unearthly radiance that shed a soft illumination upon the splendour of temple porticoes and palace gates.

Tall columns once more stood side by side ; arches surmounted arches, sculptured marble filled gaping breaches, and the stately courts of the Caesars stood erect in ghostly pride. From arch and gateway, from portico and hidden corridor, from long colonnades and far descending stairs, there rose a faint rumour of whispering voices, a tread of muffled footsteps, confused echoes of wavering sounds. Sounds scarcely heard, not to be distinguished, save now and then, when a heavy measured beat revealed the march of soldiers, or the clash of arms and a sharp outcry announced a sentry's challenge. Such sounds did Pan hear as he smiled again, his features once more whole and restored to their old debonair grace, and there was derision in his smile.

II

THE POETS' CORNER

THE POETS' CORNER

A GROUP of shades is seated in a semi-circle at the end of a grove of bay trees. They wear that bored look of people who expected to find themselves in more important company, and each regards his neighbour with disdain. They are evidently waiting for some arrival, though with an air of indifference that is ostentatiously displayed. One of them, whose torn cloak ill conceals a dingy tunic, makes vain efforts from time to time to engage his neighbours in conversation and at last breaks the silence with a remark addressed to the company.

" We are not all here to-night."

This statement, though obviously voicing the general sentiment, meets with a chilling want of success. Only one shade, with a straggling grey beard, turns his head to cast a disgusted glance at the speaker and then yawns.

The torn cloak. " I say that we are not all here to-night."

The grey beard. " What does our friend mean by *we* ? We are manifestly all *here* since we cannot be in two places at the same time."

The torn cloak, sweetly. " I accept the correction. Everyone knows that our honoured

Orbilius is a better grammarian than poet. What I wished him to understand was that certain poets, more illustrious than ourselves, who sometimes deign to honour us with their company seem to-night to have deserted our meeting."

The grey beard. "I object to the words 'more illustrious.' It is one of our rules that no comparisons should ever be made amongst us. And what is it, moreover, that makes one poet more illustrious than another? It is not the fame that he acquires among the unthinking multitude; it is not the number of his readers nor the quantity of his works; it is the quality——"

"Of his readers. There I quite agree with Orbilius." The interruption comes from an eager shade who has been visibly fidgeting to speak ever since the general silence was broken. "It is the quality of our readers that really matters. To please the sons of a Caesar is better than winning the applause of a crowd of idlers at the baths. The divine Augustus was a very good judge of verses and a great friend of mine. Which reminds me of a most entertaining story of my friendship with the Prince which I must really tell you. It happened——"

The grey beard. "The quality of his poetry, I was going to say when I was rudely interrupted. For what is the aim of a poet? Is it not to describe noble actions in exactly suitable words? He who is best skilled in the right use of words, whose delicate ear rejects all that savour of vulgar speech, who adds beauty to what he relates by the language in which he relates it,—such a man is a true poet, and illustrious in

the same measure. The true poet must be a grammarian; and a grammarian is therefore necessarily a poet, for no one knows better how to frame the parts of speech to give them their full meaning. Before I wrote my great epic on the civil wars I know of no one who was so accomplished in the use of the Latin tongue as to merit the name of poet; except perhaps Lucretius, who very improperly used verse for the teaching of philosophy."

The torn cloak. "Thrice fortunate must have been the scholars of Orbilius, who alone were privileged to hear their master's epic. We, who have been less fortunate, can only bow humbly to his own judgment, that he was the first, and—I think he says—the last of the Latin poets."

The grey beard, in a grumbling voice. "It is no fault of mine that you are ignorant of my epic. I have always been ready to recite it to you, but I have never got as far as the third verse before your clamour has silenced me."

A shade in the background. "Who was it who made the rule that no poet should be allowed to recite his own works? Orbilius. Who is ever the loudest in shouting at a transgressor? Orbilius. I wish Orbilius would sometimes remember that he is not still teaching his school and that he must abide by his own rules."

Another shade. "As we are speaking of this rule I wish to draw the company's attention to the unworthy method adopted by two of our number to evade it. You will all have remarked how frequently Gaurus recites the verses of his friend Auctus, and how invariably Auctus

returns the compliment by reciting those of Gaurus. The other day, thinking to give Auctus pleasure, I praised the poetic style of Gaurus, attributing great value to his epic on the Augustan age. Auctus begged me to desist, declaring that the poems of Gaurus made him feel sick. It was immediately clear to me, as it will be to you, upon what a dishonourable compact these two have entered."

Gaurus, sulkily. "It is by no wish of mine that Auctus recites my verse. Indeed in his mouth they almost make me sick myself, so vilely does he stutter and stumble over them."

Auctus, mildly. "I did my best, but I confess that I have always had a difficulty in pronouncing words clearly. Especially, if our dear Gaurus will forgive me, when their sense is not very intelligible. But why do we waste so much time in these disputes about rules? Thanks to Orbilius this haunt of ours has been turned into a kind of school where everything seems to be forbidden, and our once pleasant discussions begin and end in angry recriminations. By all the Muses and the sacred fount of Helicon, poetry cannot be trammelled by the rules of a schoolmaster! Why should we not be free to recite each other's verses, or even our own verses if we please?"

The grey beard. "I have no objection to Auctus and Gaurus reciting their own verses to each other if they wish, what I dislike is to have to listen to them myself."

The eager shade. "Now that is a good idea. Let us make the rule that every poet is allowed to recite his poems to an audience of one. After

all a single hearer is often the best audience if he is really capable of appreciating the beauty of poetry. I, myself, have been more then content with one listener. I remember once when I had recited a poem to the divine Augustus, the noble Caesar turned to me and said——"

The torn cloak. "Ah praised be the Gods! here come three of our beloved truants! Welcome noble Silius! Welcome dear Horace! Thrice welcome dearest Martial—thou art in my debt for a supper and I am still waiting to be paid."

Silius Italicus advances with great dignity, returning all salutations with an affable but slightly pompous wave of his hand. Horace, tripping at his side with a short jaunty step, salutes the whole company with cheerful amiability. Martial's expression of quizzical good-humour turns to a grimace at the sight of Gaurus. Silius is easily persuaded to accept the post of honour, seating himself in the centre of the semi-circle. The shade with a torn cloak pulls Martial down to a seat beside him, throwing an affectionate arm round his shoulders. Silius motions to Horace that he should take the place on his right.

Horace, feigning terror. "No! no! not within reach of Orbilius! He is too prone to forget that I am no longer the small boy whom he used to beat for an ill-learnt lesson. Well I owe him one debt of gratitude. He made the Greek tongue so hateful to me that I learnt all the better how to use my own. But we have surely interrupted some interesting discussion by our arrival, pray let us know what it was."

The eager shade. "You came at a happy moment, Horace. I was just about to recount a very amusing tale of myself and our master, the Divine Augustus, the kind patron of us both. You must know the tale well, for Augustus loved to tell it. It happened once that——"

The grey beard. "Horace—where is your companion Virgil? It is long since he ceased to accompany you here. I hope that he has not abandoned our gatherings altogether? The absence of some of our friends—Propertius or Catullus for instance—I support gladly, but I should grieve if Virgil came no more among us."

Horace, rather shortly. "You had better ask Silius. He seems to know more about Virgil now than anybody else—even than Virgil's life-long friends."

Silius. "Nay, dear Horace, you would not surely grudge the kindness that our great Virgil has shown to me, the most devoted of his worshippers. Remember you had the privilege of knowing our glorious master in his lifetime, of witnessing his triumphs when both of you inhabited the earth, of sitting at table with him, of hearing him read his poems for the first time. What would I not have given to have lived in those days! But I could only come to him in the cold world of the shades; not altogether undeserving of his notice, for many were the honours that I paid to his memory during my own lifetime. It was my great admiration for Virgil, and for you too, dear Horace, that turned my thoughts to the Muses and caused me to spend all my leisure in the composition of poetry."

Horace gaily, recovering his good humour. "It seems that Virgil and I are responsible for a good deal. But to answer your question, revered Orbilius, I can only tell you that Virgil is so occupied with a new friend of his, a native of Florentia, that he seems to have little time to spare for the rest of us. You will always find them together, watching the work of the Furies, or interrupting Minos with their advice while he passes sentence on the dead. Both Catullus and Propertius are more pleasantly engaged, or doubtless you would see them here. But let me know, please, what was the subject of your discussion when we interrupted you."

The torn cloak. "Orbilius was arguing on his old theme that the essential quality of a poet was a knowledge of grammar, and that the more correct the language the greater the poet. We did not think so in our day, did we Martial? The world asked something more of poets then than the correct use of high-sounding words."

Silius Italicus. "Nevertheless there is a measure of truth in what Orbilius says. If not the only essential, surely correctness of speech is the most important of essentials. For myself, I would esteem it more important than another necessary—the choice of a noble theme. Take our great Virgil himself, for instance, and see how well the faultless language of the poet matches the grandeur of his subject. Nor must we forget the great qualities of industry and patience which shrink from no labour however arduous; the unremitting toil that polishes and smoothes away all roughness and, like the hand of the sculptor passing over his marble, is loth

to let the creation go forth without one more touch. But how should I speak of what is necessary to the poetic art when Horace is present ? "

Horace. " You know my treatise on the art of poetry ? "

Silius. " I know it by heart, my dear Horace."

Horace. " Excellent Silius ! I might have been sure of that. As I have said, we have much to answer for, Virgil and I ; he set the example, I gave the precepts, and behold a world full of poets. How easy it is to become a poet when one knows the secret. Some knowledge of grammar and metre and a few simple rules, what more is wanting ? I am told that not long after we left the world Parnassus was so crowded with votaries of the Muses that not even Deucalion's bark could have found a resting place on it, and, by Apollo, there were more than sufficient verse-makers even in our day. The Muses are the richer by many fervid invocations, and paper-making is become the best of trades. And yet, when I hear Orbilius and Silius discoursing upon what makes a poet, my mind misgives me."

Silius. " Let Horace tell us then what is the best ingredient for poetry."

Horace. " Ah ! that is an admirable way of putting the question. I can answer that. The best ingredient is a jar of good old Caecuban. I am not denying the merit of my own Sabine wines, but even when old they still lacked the mellowness, the cheering warmth that best led to inspiration. There was always a little roughness in my home vintage which was apt, perhaps,

to inspire some roughness too in verse-making. What do you say, Martial? What gift of Bacchus helped you best to overtake the reluctant Muse?"

Martial. "I drank what wine I could get, and when I could get it, without much care for its age or quality. I had not the two most powerful men in Rome for my patrons, nor had I a snug little property and a comfortable income."

Horace. "It may be that you were the better poet without them. But what says Silius? the wealthy Silius within whose reach were all wines however rare? Silius who was rich enough to buy all Parnassus for himself, and, if he so pleased, to have his many thousands of verses engraved on bronze."

Silius, very stiffly. "Horace as usual makes a mock of us, and turns our discussion into jest."

Horace. "By all the gods, I am not jesting. Though I see an ominous look in the eye of Orbilius which betrays twitching fingers, and a longing to chastise his old scholar. Be not angry, noble Silius, and do you spare me this once more, Orbilius, and I will be as serious as you please."

Martial. "I, for one, would not quarrel with Horace for his answer. But in my day a poor poet like myself had reason to covet other things than wine. Indeed, if I had been asked then what was the most necessary possession for a poet, I should have said a good pair of legs, for many was the time I envied the strength of some sturdy Cappadocian porter. Ye hills of Rome are witnesses of how I walked! I walked

to find means to stay my hunger, and often was only the more hungry for walking. Think what a poet's life meant for a luckless provincial like myself, a stranger in Rome, almost friendless, a client of other clients, a parasite of other parasites. To start from my wretched lodging before daybreak and walk far across the Tiber to salute Gallus only to find that Gallus has awakened in an ill humour and that there is no welcome for his friends; to trudge back to the house of Parthenius, and Parthenius is already gone forth; on again to the house of Maximus, who by good fortune is at home, and then to learn after an hour's conversation that Maximus himself is dining with Tigellinus. More than half the day gone; my belly still empty and nothing in my pouch but tenpence, the rich sportula that I have carried off from the generous Gallus. Well, the afternoon must be spent in walking too: my liberal patrons will do nothing for me if I am not always at their elbows, and so I trudge again at the litter's side, to the baths, to the Esquiline, back again to the Forum, downhill and uphill, jostled by slaves and porters, with a sick soul and aching feet. And then to end the day supping off half a rib of pork at the house of the rich Mancinus or drinking the diluted vinegar which Tulla calls Falernian. Oh, the black pavements of Rome! the steep stairs, the crowded lanes! my legs ache again at their memory. Good strong legs was what a poet needed most in my day. You said just now, dear Horace, that you and Virgil had much to answer for, and you spoke truly. You brought a shoal of little poets to Rome, and

myself among them. More than fifty years after the tomb had closed over you on the Esquiline, a foolish boy was repeating your verses by the banks of the Salo in far off Bilbilis and vowing that he would be a poet also. Let me be honest; it was the story of your life more than the beauty of your verses that stirred my emulation. I too would be the friend of princes and share with them all the joys of the city of pleasure. And I came, to find what? You had no love for Maevius; think of a city where every other man was a Maevius! I don't mean my dear old friend beside me here in his ragged cloak, though chance called him Maevius also; he can tell you that, Roman citizen though he was, he fared as ill as the rest of us. But imagine a city full of poetasters, where every household slave had a copy of verses hid in his bosom and every rich man of fashion had written an epic or a tragedy. You had Augustus for your friend and master; the only Caesar whose ear I gained was Domitian. If it was not always easy for your republican soul to be grateful to Augustus; think what it was to have to flatter Domitian. You enjoyed the constant kindness, the lavish hospitality, the true friendship of Maecenas, who thought no gift too rich for a poet, not even a fine country house; Domitian's bounty, a tumbledown hut, had not even a roof to keep the rain out until the kind Stella gave me the shingles to cover it. Some good friends I found in the course of time, Stella, Proculus, Priscus, our noble Silius here, and best of all Pliny, who did me the greatest as well as the last service when he bestowed on me the means of escape.

For more than thirty years I endured it ;—years of struggle, of poverty always, of humiliation often, lightened by such little, such rare little triumphs. Hardly half a dozen days in all that time that were worthy to be marked with white chalk. And yet—and yet ! How strange and perverse a thing is the mind of man ! Here am I back again brooding once more over the scene of my unhappiness and not at Bilbilis where I knew all that was really good in my life, the gay, careless rapture of my childhood and the generous love and devotion with which Marcella surrounded my declining years. For I loved Rome, with the foolish heart of a poet ; I loved Rome, wanton harlot that she was, unfaithful, shameless, cruel and insolent ; and my dead love will return to her still and listen again at her door."

Horace. " She gave you fame, Martial. Bilbilis could never have given you that. And for such a man as you, a true poet, the laurel crown means more than bread. Was it nothing to you to hear your verses sung in the streets ? "

Martial. " What did she give my good, patient Maevius here, a better poet and a far better man than I was ? Rome gave me fame, you say, but how did she give it ? If I had been faithful to my youthful vows she would have given me nothing. If I had remained honest and steadfast, as Maevius did, I should never have known fame in my lifetime or afterwards. Listen, Horace, what is the worth of the fame that we poets struggled for ? Think how I got it. Whether it was my due or not. Rome did not give it me ; I filched it from her.

And by Mercury! I could blush now for the means. I should soon have starved if I had waited for her to reward my serious verses, my odes to the gods and the genius of Rome, my comedies modelled after Menander, my satires and epodes in the style of the famous Horace,—all burnt, my dear Horace, so the world can make no comparisons between us. One learns quickly in the school of necessity, and I soon made a bonfire of my cherished works and turned my attention to what our Romans wanted. I flattered and I insulted; more often I was insolent, for more people take pleasure in a piece of insolence than in flattery. Flattery pleases but one man, its subject; insolence delights the enemies of the person insulted and most of his friends; for one person who enjoys a well-turned panegyric at least half a hundred will delight in an ill-natured satire. I indulged my talent for both. I praised Domitian, and the buildings of Domitian, and the laws of Domitian, and his new cuirass, and his amphitheatre, and his lions; I praised his lions because they were magnanimous, and his elephant because it was polite, and his rhinoceros because it was a rhinoceros; I praised Hermes the gladiator, and Carpophorus the bestiarius; and I praised Issa, a puppy belonging to Publius, because its indoor manners were blameless. By the Gods! I think that Issa was the most deserving of them all. And then I would turn to vituperation, sneer at rich men because they were rich and poor men because they were poor, rail at vices which I shared myself and heap obloquy on the heads of men no

worse than I was, slander some pretty wench because she refused me a welcome and cover with the basest ridicule some poor old trot like Vetustilla because she was too hospitable. And I became famous. I gave the Romans what they wanted, and they gave me fame. Then I knew what it was to hear my epigrams in everybody's mouth, to be pointed out in the theatre or in the Forum. "That is Martial! the famous Martial!" "Time has laid low the monument of Messala, its stately pile is now but a heap of broken stone; time has reduced to dust the lofty marbles that enshrined the memory of Licinius; but my verses live on always." Yes! My old boast has been justified. But my verses are eternal because malice and spite are eternal."

The ragged cloak. "It is not true, brother of mine! Help me, good Horace, to make my dear wrong-headed Martial see the injustice of his words. It is the best that is in us, or in our books, and not the worst that preserves them and us from destruction."

Martial, scoffingly. "And where did'st thou find my best, kind and faithful friend; was that the best that Rome applauded the loudest?"

The ragged cloak. "What do I care for the applause of Rome! The best in Martial was that which made me love him. His tenderness, his generosity, his scorn for what was mean, his admiration for what was really good and lovable. I loved the man whose tears kept fresh flowers for ever on the grave of little innocent Erotion; whose eyes turned wistfully to the cleanly joys and virtues of the countryside amid the sordid

surroundings and vices of the city ; whose heart unspoilt by adulation and success, went out so freely to meet his humble friends. I loved the real Martial, the true poet, whose eye was quick to see beauty where beauty really was, and whose tongue clothed it for ever in imperishable music."

Martial. " Thou wert always more a philosopher than a poet. But what I say is true nevertheless. To succeed, to gain fame or any reward whatever in the world of men it is not to the best in their nature that the poet must appeal. Ask Atrectus what books he sold most readily. Remember the titles and names that he used to place outside the little shop at the corner of Caesar's Forum. Both Atrectus and the poet had to live like other men, to eat, drink, clothe, and lodge themselves, and how should they find means to do so unless they sold what the world wanted to buy. It was very well for a rich man like Ligornius to reward people for listening to his poems—Ye gods are witnesses how dearly I paid for dining with Ligornius !—but for myself the fates had ordained that I should earn my livelihood."

Horace. " It seems to me that we are wandering away from our question—What makes a good poet ? Orbilius and Silius say a correct use of language. I say, some good wine in his cellar. Martial asserts the need of a strong pair of legs ; and Martial's old comrade thinks that a love for what is beautiful and good is the most important of all. As for that, I have known many faithful followers of Aristotle who were not poets, and many poets who certainly had little respect for Aristotle. Has no other shade an answer ? "

The eager shade. "And I say a good and generous patron. I lived, as Horace did, in the time of that greatest of princes—Augustus. Many a time did I seek his presence with a copy of verses, and rich was the reward that I carried away with me. But not at first did Augustus listen to me, and that reminds me of a really diverting answer that I once made to the Caesar. Horace will remember the corner of the imperial atrium where Augustus was wont to receive suitors."

Horace. "Do I remember? No, I do not remember. The dawn arises. Come, Martial, we will be moving."

The eager shade, in despair at seeing a general move on the part of the others. "No, no, Silius, you will not do me this discourtesy. Every time that I have attempted to speak I have been interrupted. Why must I never be heard? Horace, why do you treat an old acquaintance with such unkindness?"

Horace. "Come then, let us have your tale if it will not keep for another occasion."

The shades hesitate and finally reseat themselves. The eager shade, but half pleased at the manner in which he has secured his audience, begins his story in a grumbling tone.

"You must know that before the divine Augustus favoured me with his generous patronage he was not so easy of access as far as poets were concerned. Afterwards, as Horace will tell you, poets were not only welcomed at his table but were even treated as friends. I do not say that I ever attained to such intimacy with the prince as was enjoyed by Virgil and

Horace, but still I was most kindly treated by him and could very well regard him as a friend as well as a benefactor. In the early days, however, he gave but a grudging attention to the poets who came to greet him and would cast but a side glance at the effusions they offered for his acceptance. Again and again I presented myself at his doors bringing my tribute of verses, only to see the prince lay them aside with an impatient hand and some cold words of acknowledgment—a poor recompense indeed for a poet who had counted on a more substantial reward. Then one day when I came, it may be for the tenth time, and offered my little tablet,—a humble panegyric of my august master—by the way, they were very well turned those verses I remember, I will recite them to you now——"

The shades in chorus. "No! no! no! no verses!"

The eager shade reproachfully. "They were very short. However, if you will not hear them it is your loss. Well! I offered my tablet, which the prince took from me himself, and then putting his hand into the bosom of his toga produced another tablet which he offered to me. 'Here, my friend,' he said generously, 'it is not just that your poetry should meet with no return. Here is a poem that I have written for you!' I opened the tablet, and there in fact were some couplets scrawled by the prince's own hand. I fear that our divine Augustus was no poet himself, for I must confess that his lines halted grievously. What was I to do? In spite of my natural disappointment at the shape assumed by the prince's gratitude, I

preserved my equanimity. I scanned his verses with a critical eye and pronounced them excellent. Then fumbling in the folds of my toga I found with some difficulty two or three little silver coins which, indeed, was all the money I had. 'Accept, great master and poet,' I said, 'this humble recompense which is all that I can offer. But know that the price I give for your verses is measured by my poverty and not by their merit!' For the first time since I had known him the Divine Augustus laughed. He laughed heartily, and I laughed too when to my great joy he bid them bring him some gold, and gave me a handful of gold coins to take away with me."

The eager shade looks round for applause.

Martial. "That is a fine story. But surely I have heard it before. Now I know. That is the story that was told of myself and Domitian."

The eager shade, exploding with indignation. "Of yourself and Domitian! But ye great gods! You were not born, Martial—neither Domitian nor yourself were born until half a century afterwards! How should the tale belong to you?"

Horace. "Nay! you must forgive our Martial, he is but jesting. What he intended to say was that he had heard the tale told of myself and Augustus. It is indeed a good old tale which I have always enjoyed."

The eager shade, almost weeping. "Horace! Horace! you cannot mean it! You know that it was to me that it happened! You know that it was of me that the story was told! No, you

cannot be so unjust! You, the recipient of such great bounty from Augustus, the hero of a hundred other tales, you have not the heart to rob me of my one—my only one. Dear Horace! be generous, confess that the story is mine."

Horace, consolingly. "Weep not—you shall have your story back again. It was yours—and we all acknowledge it. Only take this advice, if you want to keep it safely, do not tell it too often."

The shades troop off, leaving the eager one still ruefully perplexed and about half content.

III

A VICTIM OF PHILOSOPHY

Philetius. This is the spot, Agamemnon.

Agamemnon. My good Philetius, I have told you already that all spots were equally good for your purpose and that there was no need to go questing to and fro on the Palatine, like a dog in search of game, when all you wanted was a place to sit down and tell me a long and probably very wearisome history.

Philetius. Ah! There speaks the philosopher who can bear the sound of no voice but his own.

Agamemnon. And there speaks the old slave who distrusts and hates all philosophers.

Philetius. Have I not reason to hate them? Would that the gods had robbed me of my hearing ere ever I came across your kind. But you shall hear my tale. Since it is permitted to the shades to revisit the scene of their tribulation and find comfort in the recital of their wrongs, you shall hear what philosophy once did for me.

Agamemnon. But what comfort shall I have? Am I not also in need of consolation? Will you, in your turn, listen to me?

Philetius. No! the gods forfend!

Agamemnon. Oh good Philetius! Oh good and honest soul of a slave, that only knows how to receive benefits! However no matter—the true philosopher looks for no return. But tell me first; why this spot rather than another?

Philetius. Because here stood my master's house. Crassus pulled it down long since to make room for his gardens. Even the house of a Valerius, the noblest blood in Rome, was defenceless against his gold. Well did the Parthians do when they filled his lying throat with molten lead. And there was another friend of Philosophers! What good had Crassus of philosophy when they showed him his son's dissevered head, and he knew that his own must follow?

Agamemnon. Possibly it helped him to die, as he did, with very seemly dignity. But, friend Philetius, you have not brought me here to grumble against Crassus?

Philetius. No, though he, too, had a part in my undoing. Here, I say, stood my master's house to which I was brought as a little child, the son of a slave. I was born at one of the farms of old Marcus Valerius, whose nephew Marcus Corvinus was afterwards consul; but you know the family, and the house, though never a philosopher entered it in my old master's day. He was poor in all but family pride, and he stood, as his fathers before him, by the old way and the old gods. The old gods, Agamemnon, whom you and Crassus despised. Did Crassus ever worship the gods or remember what was their due? did he ever remember the spirit of his father, to do him

honour? What wonder then that he left no son to revere his own.

Agamemnon. I pray you, Philetius, leave Crassus in peace, and get to your tale.

Philetius. In peace! May he lie in torment for ever! Very different was my old master, and very different also the manner of his death. In his house there were but few slaves; and I was educated in all that belonged to their management and superintendence, for I was to succeed my father when service grew too heavy for his age. And I was well taught too, Agamemnon, though no philosopher helped in my training; better taught than those slaves to whom Crassus first owed his wealth. Crassus! and you would have me love Crassus who made his fortune by selling slaves by the hundred, and his fame by crucifying them by the thousand? Well, when I was yet little more than a youth my father died, but in spite of my lack of age and experience Marcus Corvinus would have me a steward in my father's place. For beside being well taught and very skilful in all that appertained to the post, I was also deservedly held in great favour and trust by my master. The pious master makes the pious servant. Never a morning that I did not stand behind him to pray and offer sacrifice to the household gods, kindling again to flame on the altar the yet warm embers of the evening before. Never a meal was eaten that I did not carry to the gods their portion and make libation to them of wine. And the great gods also I worshipped, and though little money of his own touches a slave's hands, yet out of

that little I found means to carry gifts which the priests of Jupiter did not despise. When my master died after many years it was to my care that he commended his son and the slender fortune that was all he left. I had loved my master, but far greater was my love for his son. I was already a man grown when he was born. I had carried him in my arms, and watched his first steps. I had shed tears of joy when he dedicated the boyish toga and golden bulla to the Lares, and my tears still flowed when I followed him to the Forum that day. Oh the brave little man that he was,—and beautiful! It was all that our slaves could do to force a way through the crowd so close it pressed upon us from every side; and everywhere there were cries of admiration and loud appeals to the gods to send him good fortune. And he, though little more than a child in years, bearing himself so bravely and yet so modestly, turned more than once to smile on faithful Philetius, poor Philetius, who . . . who . . ., Oh miserable me! miserable me! I could weep again when I think of that day.

Agamemnon. Think not of it then, poor Philetius, and remember that excessive grief may mar even the best of tales.

Philetius. It is easy for philosophers to be calm. But I will not dwell on the days of my happiness. My master's death came when his son was eighteen years of age. He was a handsome youth, impetuous, impatient of control, but of a kindly disposition. His inheritance was small; but he was fortunate to have any in those troubled times. His debts were many,

but that mattered little, for with his name and ability he was sure to gain wealth. Had it not been for the thrice-accursed philosophers all would have been well with him. But even during the last years of his father's life he had made friends with them and listened to their teaching, and now he must have one to live in the house and be always by his side ; one who made a mockery of our pious rites and blasphemed even the high gods. You smile, Agamemnon, but who else, think you, preserved our house when all was falling in Rome ?

Agamemnon. If you ask me, Philetius, I should answer that the house stood because of its poverty and the indolence of its owners. Your old master, and his father before him, were good and just men, that is true, but the gods had as little to do with their safety as with their moral character.

Philetius. And I tell you that it was not so. The proof is that as soon as the gods were neglected misfortune fell upon us. Great fault was mine, though what can a poor slave do to prevail with a high-spirited youth who will not listen, or how shall he combat the pernicious doctrine of a Greek whose cunning tongue is skilled in persuasion. Alas ! I hearkened also, and forgot my duty to the dead, while I made believe that I was giving obedience to the living. I too became a philosopher.

Agamemnon. You ! you a philosopher ! Forgive my amazement, and tell me, friend Philetius, what was your philosophy ?

Philetius. I learnt there were no gods. I learnt that the dead took no heed of the living

and cared nothing for their sacrifices and libations. I learnt that invocations were but vain words addressed to the empty air. That I was god myself, if I were a philosopher and wise. Oh, there was much more beside, but that was the gist of your friend's teaching.

Agamemnon. Shades of Panaetius and Plato ! and this is your wisdom in the mouth of a slave !

Philetius. Laugh at me, if you will, it was no laughing matter for me when I deserted the old gods. All went ill with us from that day. The altar was cold, the Lares sate forgotten and untended, the house abandoned by their benevolence grew disordered. All went ill ; but the young Marcus laughed and paid no heed. When money grew scarce, for there was trouble with the slaves on our Sabine farms and little profit came from them, he only laughed and borrowed from Crassus, who refused him nothing. At last even Crassus was tired of his follies and bade him accompany Pompey, who was then setting out with a great expedition to punish the sea-robbers who plundered our corn ships. Young Marcus was nothing loth. Pompey took him gladly for his father's sake, and I went with him also, for my great love persuaded him not to leave me behind. The boy was of good spirit and found great favour with Pompey, though of fighting he saw little. Pompey did not return but went on against Mithridates, and left young Marcus to watch certain matters in his interest at Alexandria of Egypt. What a city ! Agamemnon, and what a people ! Every day a new folly ! truly my

very young master was smitten with madness. Nothing availed with him; nor tears nor entreaties, though I spared neither, until he began to weary of both, and that was the beginning of my undoing. For I would be heard, and day and night I implored him to remember whose son he was and his father's teaching. More than once I clung to his robes and tried by force to prevent his outgoing, calling upon him to strike me if he would, but to listen to reason. He never struck me. He was ever gentle even in his speech. I can hear his honeyed voice still, and feel the soft touch of his caressing hands upon my bowed head. "Dear Philetius, be not so anxious. To-day I feast, to-morrow thou shalt have thy wish, and all will be well!" So he cajoled me, while love and anxiety fought within my breast. Then suddenly his humour changed and he smiled no more. And I growing more fearful, redoubled my importunity that he should change his way of life. One morning he came to me with a sealed letter and told me that he must send me on a mission back to Rome, that this letter must be given into the hands of Crassus in Rome, and that nobody but I would know how to deal with his answer; at the same time he gave me to understand that his own return to Rome, which I fervently desired, depended on Crassus being able to arrange with certain of his creditors there. What could I do but obey? Alas, what other virtue has a slave but obedience? Full of forebodings I set forth. I remember on the morn of my departure he raised me to my feet as I knelt

before him and looking at my streaming tears he seemed to waver. Then with the old laughing gaiety, that I had not seen for many a day, he wiped away my tears and touched my cheek with his lips, bidding me take courage. "Farewell!" he cried, "we meet again in Rome." And I climbed into the vessel and stood there gazing at the shore, long, long, after his form had disappeared. I tell you, Agamemnon, that I loved my master and nowhere is there greater love than that of a slave. And there is good reason for that since a free man has many outlets for his love and can change as he will, while a slave has but one. And as all love is slavery, so none but a slave can fully be possessed by it. What do you think?

Agamemnon. Perhaps you are right, Philetius, though I prefer your second reason to your first. But get on with your story.

Philetius. Well, I loved my master, and for a thousand reasons whether they would seem good to a philosopher or not. I had seen him grow in beauty and grace that the gods themselves might have envied, and he was the pride of my eyes. As I lay, tossed and miserable in the ship that carried me from him, I saw him always before me, and I spent the long weary hours in wondering who tended to his wants in my absence and how he fared; hoping that all was well with him and yet wishing that he might miss my faithful service. All was not well with me. It was one thing to travel in the train of Pompey; to ride the sea in the great sweeping galleys; to be surrounded by fellow-servants and friends; to carry Rome with me

across the wide waters and feel the protection of her legions and her might at every turn. It was quite another thing to go forth into the world alone, among strangers, unprotected, a mark for misfortune. And misfortune came at once with contrary winds that drove our wretched little ship to take refuge on the Asian coast. Our journey to Alexandria had been most favourable, and this was the first time that I had seen a black and angry sea under a black and sullen sky, and known the dread the waves inspire when they toss their white crests. With my heart full of fear and my stomach of misery I clung, cold and dripping, to the slippery benches, trampled and spurned by the sailors' feet, as they hauled the ropes, shifting the sails to the changing wind. The wind came ever more fiercely against us; and many hours passed before it fell, and our ship battered and broken lay on calmer waters not far from a dark forbidding coast. There we had no sooner landed than we were attacked and plundered of all that we had. The rough sailors might jeer at me at sea, but at least on land I was their master, and thanks to my skilful tongue they found liberty again, and we stole away by night on a favouring wind with our ship but half furnished.

The man who travels by sea has need of a hardened body and the favour of the gods. But encouraged by the praise of the sailors, who acknowledged their gratitude, and conscious that my body, hardened by adversity, gave me less trouble, I was still heedless of the gods and began to find pride in my new philosophy. Was

it not clear that I was sufficient to myself ; that I was brave and skilful, and, if I were only true to my courage and my skill, that I wanted no help from outside. With a pitying smile I watched Lysias, the master of the ship, when each morning he made prayer and burnt incense before the little figure of Isis that stood on the prow.

I will not weary you, Agamemnon, with the full tale of our wanderings ; but will come at once to the worst that befell me. You must know that the good Lysias who had promised to carry me to Sicily, for which country he said he was bound, had long since repented of his bargain. What with the condition of his ship and the ill-reports of contrary winds off Malea, he would consent to go no farther than Rhodes where we had stopped to refit. Here, with infinite trouble, I found a ship to carry me onwards, which landed me at last after many delays in the port of Phalara of Thessaly. There I gladly parted company with it and its brutal owner who had no respect for the duty he owed to his passengers. Worn and wasted with travel, my money all gone, the precious letter near my bosom still sewn in the folds of my tunic, I sat down beside the road at the distance of one day's march from Phalara and considered what I should do next. I should have sat down earlier for this purpose had I not had reason to get as quickly as possible far away from the master of the ship ; for under my cloak were concealed some objects I had secretly taken from him as a compensation for his breach of faith,—a little gold image of Glaucus and a

thin chain that he kept locked up in his chamber near the prow. I knew that he would not miss them till he returned to the ship on the following day ; but I knew also that he would pursue me to recover them, for he attached great value to the image before which, like the superstitious Greek that he was, he would often burn incense. For this reason I purposely took a road that led northwards, having begged him before to set me on the way to Athens.

Agamemnon. Wait a minute, Philetius. You mocked at the piety of Lysias and you stole the god of the master of your next ship. Am I to understand that this was the conduct of a philosopher ?

Philetius. Well, at any rate, I learnt nothing from philosophy that forbade it. I wanted money, and took the gold that good fortune offered me. Be true to thine own genius, said the philosopher, and I was true to myself, and my master's interests.

Agamemnon. It seems to me that the philosophers found a strange pupil when you began to listen to them. Well, go on with your story.

Philetius. But, I tell you, the man owed me compensation. I joined his ship as a passenger. He, by threat and violence, made me work as a sailor. He refused to give back the money I had paid for my passage. He starved me and would have beaten me had I not obeyed his orders. And it was his fault that I was landed in Thessaly instead of at Corinth when I should at least have found friends to help me.

Agamemnon. Well, well, let us leave the ship-master and get on with your journey.

Philetius. Truly I had had enough of the sea and was not ill pleased to leave it also. You must know that two great roads went out of Phalara, one leading to Lamia on the way to Athens and the other to Echinus. I took the latter, but did not keep to it long, fearing pursuit even in that direction, and turned off by a path towards the mountains. I passed many cottages of peasants, but feared to approach any on account of the fierceness of their dogs, until hunger and thirst made me bold, and I entered the yard of a little farm when I saw some women working. They called the master of the house, who received me kindly and gave me food and drink while I told him a piteous tale of misfortune, representing myself as a freedman, travelling to Rome to recover an inheritance, who had been plundered by robbers on the coast. Finding him both honest and kindly of nature, I told him that I had still a little gold, and after some bargaining I bought of him, for several links of my gold chain, a small but stout donkey, well accustomed to carry a rider, a leather wallet and some food. That night I passed under his roof, where I learnt from his women how fortunate I had been in having entered their house and not that of their neighbour, whose wife was a witch of the most evil kind. Dreadful were the tales they related of her witchcraft ; how she cast spells upon those who offended her and turned them into wild beasts to roam in the forest. One man, a soldier, had disappeared after living in her house

for a week, and no one knew what had happened to him until he returned from the mountains in the form of a bear, and killed many sheep and fowls.

Agamemnon. Come, my good Philetius, where was your philosophy when you listened to these tales? Did you really believe that man could transform man to beast?

Philetius. In the first place it was not a man, Agamemnon, it was a woman, and who can say what a woman will not make of a man? And I tell you that you too would have believed in witchcraft and in other awful powers if you had travelled in that country. The plains were fair and rich beyond all that we have in Italy, full of fine horses and sleek cattle; but leave the plains and go among the mountains and you come to places that were full of dread, tall cliffs, deep ravines where black rivers ran with a hollow sound, high passes where the wind blew cold from the snowy mountain tops. And then the dark gloomy forests which clothed the mountain side, where the narrow paths led over foaming torrents, and past huge rocks and dark caves. Places filled with disquiet in the day time, and with horror by night. And I was alone and unprotected; a stranger too, who found even the tongue of the people hard to understand, for they did not speak the same Greek as we do.

My donkey was a great comfort to me, both for his willingness and his company. His former owner had set me on a way which would shorten my journey, and I, glad to avoid the great roads, followed the rough mountain track

with what confidence I could. Such people as we met were friendly, and gave us shelter by night. But it was long before our wanderings led us through the mountains and down to the great plains where Larissa lay, still many days distant. And then it was that befell my crowning misfortune ; for one evening suddenly we encountered a band of robbers, returning in haste to the mountains, who carried me back with them. Little resistance could I offer them. Indeed, I was glad to escape with my life, for their first proposal was to take the donkey and cut my throat lest I should give news of them to their pursuers. For six long months, Agamemnon, I lived with this scum of thieves and murderers with no hope of escape save by death. Beaten almost daily, giving trembling obedience to the orders of the vilest among them, performing all the meanest tasks, the butt of their cruelty and derision, I know not how I lived or why I did not lay hands on myself and so find deliverance from my misery. Twice I tried to get away ; but their cave had been so cunningly chosen that it was as difficult to leave it as to approach it without their knowledge, and each time I was caught and brought back to suffer worse treatment. Small comfort did I find in my philosophy then ; my thoughts were all of the past, and I regretted bitterly my impiety.

One night, when wearied with watching the shadows of the flickering red flames upon the smoky roof, I had fallen asleep, my old master appeared to me in a dream. His face was serene and benevolent and he bent over me

and touched my shoulder. I tried to speak, but my voice was strangled in my throat ; and with the violence of my effort I awoke, and he was gone, but he left me comforted and hopeful.

It was very shortly after this apparition that the band went out on an enterprise against a village, situated at a great distance in the plains, which they hoped to plunder during the absence of the inhabitants at a neighbouring festival. Great were their preparations for this raid ; two goats were sacrificed to Mars, and the last of their wine was drunk at a supper which was continued till day-break. Then they started in some disorder, leaving only one of the band behind them, and an old woman who was even more wicked than themselves. They should have returned on the fourth day, but that day passed and then others without any sign of them. On the eighth day of their absence their comrade became uneasy and went forth in search of news. He returned the night afterwards and I was awakened by his voice and heard him tell the old woman how he had found one of the band dying by the roadside, from whom he learnt the disaster of the others. They had been surprised by the returning villagers while trying to get away with their booty and attacked with such fury that only one had escaped, and he desperately wounded. The old woman and the remaining robber determined on immediate flight, and hurriedly divided between them the contents of a chest in which the treasure was kept. When I looked in it after their departure, for such was their haste that they had forgotten my existence, I found

nothing but clothing of different kinds, some objects too heavy for them to carry and of little worth, a few silver coins, and my letter still with its seals unbroken. I took the letter and the silver, and fled myself.

Fate had done its worst against me. I remember how, as I left the cave, carefully putting forward my right foot, I especially called upon the majesty of Jupiter and repeated the old invocation; and that with the words cheerful hope and courage returned to my heart. I will not tell you how in time I found my way to Larissa, a city more crowded than the most crowded quarters of the Suburra and far more filthy; or how I set forth again on the road to Dodona, where I was able to pay part of my debt to Jupiter, giving money for sacrifice to the priests at his shrine.

More than two years were passed since I had left Rome with my young master. I was back there again, stained with travel, worn out with hardship, but fearing above all things that the delays of my journey had made my mission in vain. Crassus, I learnt at once, was far from Rome, and I was at a loss to know what to do. Though the house had been sold I came to this spot and began to consider whether it were not well for me to open my master's letter and discover what he desired of Crassus in case I might still appeal to some other of his friends. I cannot tell you, Agamemnon, how often I changed my mind. Now I would open the letter; and now I would not. At last I took courage and broke the seals. All the miseries of the last two years were nothing by the side

of this last grief. There were but a few lines of writing and this was what I read:

"Good Crassus—the bearer of this is an old and faithful friend of mine. I make you a present of his services. Do what you will with him, but for my sake let him not return to Egypt."

And that was all. It was for this that I braved more dangers and suffered more misfortunes than the much-enduring Ulysses. This, Agamemnon, was what your philosophers had made of my young master.

IV

A PRIVATE VIEW

A PRIVATE VIEW

Theodorus (an architect). We have arrived there first. Well, they cannot be long in coming now, for I saw their litters not far behind us. Meanwhile let me explain why I have asked you, my excellent Fabullus, and you, my worthy Lycius, to meet me here at the scene of our recent labours. Domitian arrives from Antium in three days' time and here is his new palace ready for him. After that it will be no longer empty. Now I have found another employer, and a very rich one, who wishes me to build him a house on the slopes of the Aventine. Quite a good site overlooking the Tiber. But he has not yet quite settled with me. Somebody has told him of a wonderful architect, newly arrived fom Athens, who is going to build houses for all the Roman nobles. Also he has seen a house that this marvellous Greek has built, all towers and pinnacles, which he would like copied. Now I am not going to build a house like a hedgehog, nor am I going to let this Greek get my rich customer. I have told him to meet me here and I would show him some of my work. It is true I did not actually design Domitian's palace ; that was the work of Rabirius ; but I

did carry out most of the design, as you know. And then I said to myself, " Why should not my good friends Lycius and Fabullus share my good fortune? I will ask them to join the party and they can point out how much their beautiful sculpture and painting has added to the beauty of the palace." Rich men are scarce just now: and sculptors and painters do not find patrons any more easily than architects. What do you say?

Fabullus (a painter). Perhaps.

Theodorus. Oh! is that all? What do you say, Lycius?

Lycius (a sculptor). I don't know. Perhaps.

Theodorus. You neither of you seem very anxious to accept my offer. What do you both mean by " Perhaps? "

Fabullus. Well, Theodorus, it is best to be candid and tell the truth. What do you mean to make us pay for the privilege of working with you? In this palace you got so much the lion's share of the spoils that Lycius and I got very little for our trouble. You seemed to think that the fact of our working for the Emperor ought to be sufficient recompense in itself. To some extent it was. But this is a very different case. We shall not be giving our best work to the immortal palace of the immortal Caesar. We shall be giving it to the vulgar house of some rich upstart where it will never be seen again.

Theodorus. No house that I build can be vulgar.

Lycius. Fabullus is quite right. If we work for you and your rich friend you must see that

we are well paid. No nonsense this time about the value of your patronage.

Theodorus. Yes: of course. I see your point of view. Well, we shall settle this afterwards. You shall be fairly treated. I swear it by the genius of Caesar himself.

Fabullus. I call the gods to witness! Now, who is your rich friend?

Theodorus. Phoebus, the son of Vespasian's freedman, the bootmaker. This one made boots for the army during the time of Titus. It was lucky for him that Titus died when he did or he might have had reason to regret it. Titus was not the man to let his soldiers be shod with rotten leather.

Fabullus. Phoebus. I know the man. Married?

Theodorus. Yes. They say his wife is even more ignorant than himself and that he knows no more than an ox.

Fabullus. He knows much less if he is the man I mean.

Theodorus. Then I have asked Metius Pomposianus to come here also. He always pretends he is such an authority with the court. Pretends even that he has some kind of claim to the throne himself. To hear him talk, you would almost believe him to be the Caesar. I thought he would impress our friend Phoebus. But here they are, Pomposianus leading the way. Look at him leaning on his two slaves as if he could not walk without them. You know he calls one of them Hannibal and the other Mago, in the memory of the deeds of his ancestors in the Punic wars. There's Phoebus and his wife.

Her name is Penthesilea. What a monster she is. Phoebus must have bought her by the weight. Who can be that strange figure walking with them ?

Lycius. I know, it is Polemonides the poet. You must have seen him at the baths. He used always to be there reciting his poems, until the bathers couldn't bear it any longer. They tried to drown him at last in the swimming pool, and now the attendants won't let him enter the baths any more.

Theodorus. Welcome, most honoured Pomposianus ! Welcome, my good friends Phoebus and Penthesilea !

Phoebus. We have brought with us our poet Polemonides. This, good Polemonides, is our architect Theodorus. Our poet, Polemonides, is engaged in writing the history of our family from the earliest times. It will be all in verse after the style of a Roman poet called Virgil, whose brother, you know, was called Homer, and wrote in Greek. Polemonides writes in both.

Theodorus. Indeed. Then all the arts are represented here. For this is the famous painter Fabullus the younger, and this the no less famous sculptor Lycius, whose beautiful creations you will now admire within the Caesar's Palace. I hope, my good Phoebus, that I may obtain their services for your own house also.

Phoebus. Polemonides, come here ! This is our painter Fabullus, and this is our sculptor Lycius. You had better tell them the beginning of your poem at once, so they may know what events and deeds they will have to illustrate.

Polemonides. " Help me, O Muses ! to sing of Phoebus the wonderful story.

" How from his earliest days he was ever the child of good fortune.

" How in his cradle an infant, like Hercules, peacefully sleeping,

" Envious serpents approached and wickedly sought to devour him.

" Swift to his feet sprang the babe, and swifter than tongue can relate it,

" Caught with his hands their coils and utterly rent them asunder.

" Not Aesculapius even could afterwards . . ."

Pomposianus. Stop that man ! Stop that man, I say ! Stop his mouth, somebody, stop it at once. Oh, ye Gods ! What a dreadful thing to happen to me. Quick, Hannibal, Mago, I am faint, let me sit down. Oh, Theodorus, when you asked me to favour you with my company did you intend this outrage ? The man never even asked my leave. How dare you recite your execrable verses to me without my permission ? Do you know who I am ? Have you not heard of Metius Pomposianus ?

Polemonides. Who has not heard of Metius Pomposianus ? Who does not know the greatest Roman of our time, in whose veins runs the sacred blood of Romulus ? worthy descendant of our ancient kings. Who does not know. . .

Pomposianus. There ! that will do. I see you do know me. You have my forgiveness this time, but don't do it again.

Penthesilea (to her husband). Who is that ? Why has he stopped our poet from reciting our history ? Polemonides ought to have gone on

all the same. He ought not to take orders from a stranger.

Phoebus. Softly : he is a friend of the Divine Domitian. Theodorus has told me all about him. He has great influence with the Caesar. We must make friends with him. He may be of great use to us. I hope that Pomposianus the friend of Caesar will deign to honour with his notice the son of Vespasian's freedman.

Pomposianus. You have my notice, worthy man ! You have my notice. So your father was a slave in the plebeian family of the Flavians. A very sad origin, very sad. Well, we are not masters of our birth. One man, myself for instance, is born in splendour of a long line of noble, even Royal, forefathers : another, like yourself, is born in the gutter, the son of slaves. Fate rules us all.

Penthesilea. What's that ? born in the gutter ? Phoebus ? Oh ! but I shall be very angry presently.

Theodorus. Come, let us enter the palace. Our right feet first, let me help you, admired Penthesilea. (*Whispers*) You must not mind what Pomposianus says. His wits, not quite, you know. Not mad, oh no ! not mad. But just a little, well you understand. Domitian has a great opinion of him all the same. Yes ! yes, I know he affects to look down upon Domitian and talks of the Emperor's family as plebeian. Well, so they are, you know, so they are. Although, of course, we don't say so. But Pomposianus is a useful man, and I am sure your husband will find him so. Perhaps

Polemonides had better keep his verses for some more opportune occasion.

Here, honoured Pomposianus and worthy Phoebus, we are standing, as you see, in the vestibule. On each side, the doors leading to the chamber of the outer guard. I would like you to note the handsome simplicity of the approach to the great door now before you. We pass the great door and here we are still in the doorway, and on either side the chamber of the inner guard. We now pass the inner door. Oh! a thousand pardons, honoured Pomposianus, I beg you to pass first, I beg you. Here we are in the atrium. And here I must draw your attention to the work of my friend Lycius. No, no, my good Phoebus, Lycius did not make all the statues. I may tell you there are several hundreds in the palace. No more than our friend Fabullus painted all the pictures. But the very best are theirs, of that you may be sure. In this case I would have you admire these two watch-dogs, worthy examples of Lycius' skill. Wonderful, are they not. I have seen our workmen turn pale and stagger backwards when they saw them for the first time, and now we will proceed to,...What's that you say, Fabullus? Oh yes! of course. I want you to admire this ceiling, that owes its unique beauty to our friend Fabullus. You recognise the subject at once, do you not? Medea contemplating the murder of her children.

Penthesilea. Whose children? Come here, Polemonides, and tell me all about it. What is the good of you if you don't explain things? Whose children?

Polemonides. Medea's.

Penthesilea. Who murdered them ?

Polemonides. Medea.

Penthesilea. He didn't say that. He said she contemplated them. Does that mean " murdered ? "

Polemonides. No, contemplate does not mean murder, though of course in this case it was the same.

Penthesilea. Oh ! You had better go away again. You are not helping me at all. I don't believe you know yourself. Where are the others ? Oh they have all gone into the next room. Do let us hurry after them. I want to hear all that Theodorus says.

Theodorus. . . . And that is the idea, you see, that I had in designing this noble apartment, worthy, I may say, of its contents, the lares of the Flavian family. Here they are already in their places. The bust of the Divine Titus. The bust of the Divine Vespasian, father of Titus and of our Emperor Domitian. The bust of his father the Estimable Titus Flavius Sabinus. The bust of. . . . Yes that is all.

Pomposianus. A very poor show. But what can one expect ? You should see the contents of my lararium. There is hardly space for the ancestors of my line, my noble line, my royal line I might say. You cannot distinguish the features of the earliest. Mere wax masks ; hardened by the long passage of time ; blackened by the smoke of the humble hearth that was once the cradle of our noble race. Row upon row, the bearers of our great and historic name surmount the stone and marble busts of their not

unknown and more recent descendants. The bust of myself, for which a niche is already prepared, is worthy of your attention, my good sculptor ;—I forget your name. A real work of art. My lares are not housed as they should be. But unworthy of its owner as it is, my modest house is open to every good Roman citizen on the feast days of my ancestors so that he may learn something of the greatest names of the past. And while I am on this subject I would like to correct a very common error. It is supposed that we owe the name of Metius to Metius Curtius of the ancient town of Alba, who engaged in the famous fight between the Curiatii and the Horatii. That is not so. Our ancestor did indeed take part in that fight, but among the Horatii. We were always good Romans. It was he who killed Metius Curtius, and our family took this name to commemorate the event. What a theme for a painter ! I have often imagined such a picture. The three Horatii,—my ancestor, for whom I would sit myself, in the foreground commanding that heroic band. The three Curiatii,—in the distance. I would advise you to think about it, my good painter ; I forget your name. And there is another point which I would like to make clear. You may not all have the good fortune to see me again, and I would like you to profit by this happy occasion to the utmost. There is one other point, I was saying. It is just seven centuries ago that one of our . . .

Fabullus. This is worse than the poet ! My honoured Metius Pomposianus, whose name I am not likely to forget, we have not time

to discuss the foundation of the city of Rome. We are here to look at Domitian's Palace.

Phoebus. Yes! Yes! I am a busy man, I have a hundred people awaiting my orders. We must not lose our time. Besides I don't want a lararium in my house. I have no use for it, remember that, Theodorus, no lararium.

Pomposianus. I should think not indeed. Well, I will be silent. I am sorry I came. Give me your arms, Mago and Hannibal.

Penthesilea. Come here, Polemonides. Why is that old man angry? What was he talking about? Are the Horatii friends of ours too? do we know them? Dead are they? What, all of them dead? Poor things. But why is he angry? It was not our fault. Oh, dear me, there they are getting far ahead of us again, and I want to hear what Theodorus says, don't make me dawdle so.

Theodorus. Here is the great inner hall, the throne room, 150 feet long, and 120 feet across. Here the Emperor will give his audiences. Look at the bronze work on the throne itself. Nothing finer ever came from Corinth. And the six statues behind the throne, beautiful are they not? Two of them the work of Lycius. Admire too these magnificent columns, sixteen as you see, the greatest that have ever yet been reared in Rome. Five times the height of a man. Fit to carry the still more magnificent arches of the ceiling. Even those two statues of Hercules and Bacchus, twice the human size, seem dwarfs beneath this lofty roof. They were brought from Egypt some thirty years ago, made, as you see, of basalt, the hardest stone

that we know. No, esteemed Penthesilea, that one is Hercules, it is the other that is Bacchus. It is the club that makes the difference, both gods wore skins of wild beasts.

Phoebus. We would like a throne room for our house. Theodorus, you might put a throne for me, too. It would be useful when I have too many visitors. They could pass before me, and I would salute them all. Then we would have two statues, of the same size as those, and also of basalt. But not of Bacchus or Hercules. Of my wife, and myself. That will look very well. Lycius could make them. He had better come to-morrow and take our measurements.

Theodorus. Not of basalt, my worthy Phoebus. Not even Lycius can work in basalt. Those two statues were begun long ago and probably took more than half a century in the making.

Penthesilea. Oh! We cannot wait as long as that. If Lycius works for us he must learn to work more quickly.

Lycius. Honoured Penthesilea! who could refuse you your wish? you shall have it. I have even now in my studio two colossal figures in purple marble which is quite as hard and even more costly than basalt. I have only to deprive them of their heads, which I will soon replace by heads of yourself and Phoebus in white marble. That combination has a very beautiful effect, and you will see several busts of the kind in the other rooms of this palace.

Penthesilea. That sounds very well, but I should like to know what kind of a body you will put my head on. I should like it to be

suitable, and modest. I would not like to be quite undressed.

Lycius. One of them represents Anubis, that is the male figure. The other is that of the most powerful and important river Goddess Thoueris, the protector of Isis. Perhaps a little alteration may be needed in her case, but that I can do by adding some bronze drapery. She has a charming shape and very like your own.

Penthesilea. Well, that is settled then. But I think the throne ought to be big enough for two.

Phoebus. No, the throne is for myself.

Penthesilea. Where am I to sit then? I never heard of such a thing? I swear to Juno! I will not be so disregarded. Come here, Polemonides, come here at once; did you ever hear of such a thing? did you ever, oh dear! there they are all going away without me again. Do hurry after them, Polemonides.

Theodorus. Here we have the Basilica where the Emperor will dispense justice. The beautiful open work of that screen is new to Rome; I recommend it to your notice, Phoebus. You might have a balustrade of the same kind. What did you say, Fabullus! Oh yes, the paintings over the doors are the work of our friend Fabullus. There is represented Jupiter seated upon his throne in Olympus, his thunderbolt in his right hand, in his left his sceptre; the judge of all, of both gods and men. Here you see Minos, seated on his throne below among the shades, to each of whom he allots his fate. Mark the urn in his hands, out of which he shakes impartially the destinies of all mortals. See in

the background the three dread sisters, Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos, busied with the fateful threads of human life.

Penthesilea. What is he saying, Polemonides? whose sisters? whose painting is it?

Polemonides. The painter is Fabullus.

Penthesilea. Our painter? Yes, of course; and they are his sisters.

Polemonides. No, no, they are not his sisters.

Penthesilea. Then whose sisters are they? I wish you would explain things to me properly. Really you are no use at all.

Polemonides. They are nobody's sisters. They are their own sisters. You have heard of the Parcae, haven't you. Only Theodorus calls them by their Greek names.

Penthesilea. I have known some Parcae. I didn't like them. I hate stingy people, whether their names are Greek or not.

Polemonides. No, you are all wrong.

Penthesilea. There, why don't you put me right. Oh! I wish I had somebody to explain things to me.

Theodorus. This way, oh Gracious Penthesilea, come this way, we are waiting for you.

Penthesilea. Oh now, isn't that beautiful? I do like that. What do you call that?

Theodorus. This is the Peristylium. It takes more than 600 paces for a man to walk round this colonnade. Shaded as you see from the sun, or from the rain. The fountains and gardens in the centre are the most beautiful that have ever been designed. And you will observe that, as all the rooms open upon this, from each one of them a view of the garden

can be obtained. Remark too the pale colours of the marbles that line the walls,—and their polish. You can almost see yourself reflected, can you not ?

Penthesilea. So you can. I can see all of myself. Isn't that beautiful ? One does not need statues or pictures in a hall like this. I do like it. It is what I call pretty. We might have one or two of these halls, architect. I should like one for myself, if Phoebus is going to have one. I suppose he won't want to share his, any more than his throne.

Theodorus. We pass by this door into the Triclinium, where Domitian will dine in winter. If the Emperor pleases there is space for nine groups of tables, and a hundred guests. And there you see on either side the twin Nymphaeums where he can entertain his guests in the summer. Are not the fountains exquisite ? Ah, when I stand here and look round, the tears come into my eyes. Such beauty, such majesty of arch and column, such gold and ivory, and precious woods. Surely no god has ever been or ever will be lodged like the Divine Domitian. Look at this wealth of shining marble, these walls and floors glowing with all the colours of Iris, these lofty ceilings of carved cedar, radiant with inlaid ivory and gold. See these fountains sparkling in the daylight, where a score of lovely Nereids disport themselves, while the water from a hundred marble channels laves their shapely shining limbs. And then stand without and mark how the lofty roofs, clothed with gilded bronze, climb heavenward, and tower in splendour above the paltry houses of

the past. What was the Golden House of Nero compared to the Palace of Domitian? Here at last the Divine Caesar can live equal with his fellow-gods. Here indeed is a possession for ever. A house that shall stand when all the world falls into decay. Here in a word is the glory of Rome.

Phoebus. Don't forget, Theodorus, you are going to build one for me.

Pomposianus. The glory of Rome, I would have you know, my good Theodorus, does not lie in bricks and marble, nor in a vulgar display of wealth. Must I recall to your mind the story of Cornelia, an ancestress of my own, who, when challenged by a rich plebeian to display her jewels, called to her side her sons and said, "These are the treasures of a Roman Matron." The glory of Rome lies in the sons of Rome. Caesar may spend all the contents of his treasury among people like yourself and your friends; and this Phoebus of yours may imitate his folly, without adding a jot to the glory and power of Rome. What is glory? It is the consciousness of past valour, the continuity of tradition. Rome, our Rome, is great and glorious, because of its great and glorious past, and in spite of its present. Alas! few of the real descendants of Romulus survive to-day. My family has dwindled down to myself, and I have no equals left among my friends. What does Virgil say?

Polemonides. "What are the deeds of the man who first, a fate-driven exile,

"Landed on Italy's shores compared to those of our Phoebus?

"Where is the fabled wealth of Midas, or even of Hades,

"When Phoebus throws in the scale the limitless store of his riches?

"Pactolus rolling in flood . . ."

Pomposianus. Pactōlus, not Pactŏlus, you miserable maundering dunce. How dare you put your fustian trash into the mouth of the venerable Virgil? Did I not tell you, I would not have you spouting verses in my presence? Oh! It was a most inauspicious hour in which I left my house this morning! Surely by your inadvertence, Hannibal and Mago, I must have crossed my threshold left foot foremost. Or where have I since set my foot that I have offended the gods? Quick let us go and make what amends we can.

Penthesilea. Oh, Phoebus, answer him. He is insulting our poet, Phoebus! He is insulting us all! Go on, Polemonides, go on with your poem. Don't you obey him. Don't you dare stop when I tell you go on. Do you think you frighten me, old man? You and your ancestors? We can have ancestors, too, if we like. Hundreds of them, thousands. New ones, too, not musty, dusty old wax masks like yours. And do you know how many slaves Phoebus has got? More than twenty thousand. You and your two crutches! You think you are very wonderful because you have been at school and learnt geometry, and rhetoric and poetry. We have got a poet of our own, and that is much better. Wait till you have heard his poem on Phoebus and then talk about your Virgil. And we have learnt things at school too. What goes

on four feet in the morning, on two feet at midday, and on three feet in the evening? Do you know the answer to that? What can a man grow on his head if his wife pleases? Do you know that? Oh, I have been at school too.

Theodorus. Honoured Penthesilea! No one wishes to offend you. I pray you to be less agitated. And do not go backwards and forwards like that. Oh! There she has done it. I knew she would, she has fallen backwards into the fountain. Quick to her help! Pull her out, Polemonides. Oh dear! Now she has pulled Polemonides in too. Pomposianus, send Hannibal and Mago to help them. I beg you! Polemonides is not strong enough to lift her alone. What! you don't want to wet your slaves? . . . Do it myself? . . . But I don't want to get wet either. Phoebus! help your wife. Do help her! Is the water deep, do you say? No, there is no danger; I assure you it is not deep, you run no risk. Then she can get out by herself? Yes, I suppose she can, but, Ah! that is right. Our good friends Fabullus and Lycius have saved them. That is a relief. Oh, most esteemed Penthesilea, I shall offer gifts to all goddesses of the fountain in return for your safety. Indeed I began to make vows to them directly you fell in.

V

ON THE GODS

Scintilla. Well ; they may all say what they like, I shall believe it is the fault of the Aediles. What we ought to have is a strong man for Aedile. When Safienus was Aedile, he stood no nonsense. When there was no bread, he just threw the bakers into prison till they found it. That is the way to treat people like that. Our Aediles are no use at all, and they are all in league with the bakers too. Do you know what our baker said to me to-day ? He could not make bread without flour, he said. " Well," I said, " go to the millers and get flour." Then he said the millers could get no corn, and without corn they could have no flour. " Well," I said, " there is plenty of corn at Ostia." I went to Ostia two years ago and saw it there myself. " Why does not the miller fetch that ?" Then he said, there was very little corn indeed, and that no corn ships had arrived for two months. " Then why do we send to Sicily and Africa," I said, " for our corn ? Why don't we grow it here ? " " You had better ask that question of the Aediles," he said. So, you see, it is the Aediles who are at the bottom of it all, and I was quite right. I believe they are all

in league together. Don't look so scornful, Pomponia. If you know so much about it, why don't you put me right ?

Pomponia. Nobody can put you right, dear Scintilla, when you talk such nonsense as that. How do you suppose the bakers are going to make bread when they are all in prison ?

Scintilla. They won't really be put in prison. They'll be told that they are to be put in prison if they don't make bread. They will find flour fast enough then. That is what Safienus would have done. When he opened his mouth, his voice rolled like thunder. Everyone was terrified, and a fine figure of a man too. Do you know what a ha'porth of bread was when Safienus was Aedile ? Why, two strong hungry slaves couldn't eat as much, and now you can't get a piece as big as my thumb for twice the money. And so pleasant and affable. I loved to see him passing through the Forum. Everybody knew him, and they'd say, " That's Safienus the Aedile." Oh, Rome was very different in those times, was it not, Gaditana ?

Gaditana. I don't know. Although I was very young, quite a girl when I first came to Rome, it was not so long ago as that. I don't remember any Safienus. I certainly paid no attention to the size of the loaves. I don't eat bread, I dare say my slaves eat it.

Scintilla. How fine we are ! And how young ! Well, Pomponia remembers if you don't.

Pomponia. In my house, as in my mother's house, we always made our own bread, and ground our own corn. I know nothing about

millers and bakers. But if you want to know why bread is scarce and dear, I can tell you. There has been a terrible drought, no rain fell when it was most needed.

Scintilla. Everybody knows that. But what I say is that the drought has nothing to do with it. What is the use of having Aediles if they don't provide bread. That is what they are for, and just think of the poor people.

Pomponia. If the Roman people remembered their duties there would be no drought. There is no religion to-day, none, and we are rightly punished for it. When there was a drought in the old days, the women would go in procession to the Altar of Jupiter Pluvius in his temple on the Capitol and ask his help. They would go in their hundreds, women veiled, their hair loose, their feet bare, their hearts pure, and Jupiter would hear their prayers and send plentiful showers.

Gaditana. Well, why don't they do it to-day? There is nothing so difficult or disagreeable about that. I would not mind weeping in procession with my hair loosened and feet bare.

Scintilla. Or with a bare back either.

Gaditana. Or, as you say, Scintilla, with a bare back either. I am not ashamed of my back, and am quite willing to bare it in a good cause.

Scintilla. We all know that, Gaditana, and some of us know . . .

Pomponia. Come, come, you two are always bickering, and you forget, too, that it is not only the outward signs of mourning that are needed. Gaditana could go with bare feet, and Scintilla with loose hair.

Gaditana. That she could, she could carry it loose in her hand.

Pomponia. Don't interrupt, Gaditana. I was saying that Scintilla and you could go with bare feet and loosened hair, but how about a pure heart? tell me that, what about a pure heart?

Scintilla. Well, what about a pure heart? I am sure my heart is as pure as anybody's.

Pomponia. I did not say that it is not. I never meant to say your heart . . .

Scintilla. Oh, you were only speaking of Gaditana, oh well! yes I see.

Gaditana. What do you mean? What do you mean? You leave my heart alone, Scintilla, don't you talk about my heart.

Pomponia. No, no, Gaditana, Scintilla is mistaken, I did not mean your heart either. I am sure it is pure from impiety. I am only speaking of the Roman people. They no longer truly believe in the old gods. They neglect them, and run after all kinds of foreign and strange deities. No, Gaditana! I am not talking about you. I know you are a foreigner yourself, and, of course, you may worship whom you please.

Gaditana. Why do you call me a foreigner? I am as good a Roman as anyone, we have been Roman citizens at Gades ever since the days of the Divine Julius. And if we do worship Venus rather than Diana, there are plenty of Roman women who do the same. I know I was a dancer, and my mother a dancer before me, but the dancer has been a good friend to Pomponia more than once.

Pomponia. Dear Gaditana, I know it. Indeed I did not mean to offend you. Who knows better than I how good your heart is. Don't think . . .

Gaditana. Well! Well! I really love you, Pomponia, and you can say what you like to me. I dare say you are right about the gods. But still it all depends upon how one is brought up as a child. You have a long line of ancestors, we all know that. And you were brought up in the country, in all the old Roman traditions, away from this Rome and its crowds of slaves, foreigners, and lying priests. Because I do not think the same as you about the gods, don't think that I like the new ones. I think they are worthy of their filthy priests ; and their priests are just scum.

Scintilla. Come, not so fast. I would not like to say that at all. I know the priests are generally a dirty, begging lot of idle vagabonds, but not all of them. And the Great Mother, the Good Mother, the Mother of the Gods,—in all reverence I breathe her name,—deserves all our worship. Do you know what she did for me ?

Gaditana. My good Scintilla, I am sure we are all very grateful that she should do things for you, but I cannot see what that has to do with it. We are talking of the old Roman gods and the scarcity of bread. Your discovery of a clean priest among the followers of Cybele won't explain anything. Nor the fact that you trot round all the shrines from Isis to Serapis in search of a remedy for a stomach-ache.

Scintilla. You and Pomponia never let me

say anything. Well, I don't care. Let us listen to Pomponia then, and she shall tell us all about what she did when she was a child, and the bread ran short. Do tell us. I love to hear your stories, Pomponia. What did you do at Aricia when the harvest failed ?

Pomponia. I don't remember that the harvest ever did fail at Aricia, and that was perhaps because we did give the gods their due.

Scintilla. But supposing there had been no bread, what would you have done ?

Pomponia. We should have gone to Ceres, I suppose. Our Ceres of the country is very different from the Ceres of Rome. But what can you expect in a city where no corn grows ? Here the goddess is represented by Scintilla's plebeian friends, the two Aediles. But in the country it is a different matter, and the feast of Ceres really means something. I need not tell you the story.

Scintilla. But I love stories, and I like them to begin quite at the beginning, so do tell it. I love to hear how the gods pursued the goddesses and all the rest. It makes one feel that they are not so far from us after all. So do go on about Ceres.

Pomponia. Well, it was in the earliest times of all, when it was always summer and men were gods, and gods were young, that Proserpine went with her mother Ceres through the wide cornfields of Sicily and lingered behind her, gathering flowers on her path. The brother of Jupiter, the father of riches as we call him, who rules the world below, saw her beauty and snatched her away from the sunshine to the dark

depths of his own kingdom, intending to make her his. In vain Ceres called for her again and again until she knew her search was useless. Quickly she fled to Olympus and implored the aid of Jupiter, who sent Hermes to bring her daughter back. Alas! Hermes came too late. Already Proserpine had eaten the pomegranate of love, and was become the wife of Hades. But Ceres would not be consoled, and with tears and prayers she so implored Jupiter that at last he persuaded his brother to spare his wife for eight months in the year and be content with the remaining four. So it was that a mother's love prevailed. And so it is that all the winter Proserpine is Queen among the pale shades below; And in the spring she comes back to her mother again, bringing joy and warmth, until the shadow of winter comes once more and the leaves fall. But Scintilla you know the story as well as I do.

Scintilla. Yes, but I like hearing stories again, and the better I know them, the more I like hearing them. And now tell us what you did at home when you were a child and worshipped Ceres.

Pomponia. It was not only Ceres that was worshipped. The country is not like Rome; it is full of gods, and every day there was some reason to do them honour. Wherever there were peaceful meadows, bright streams, hidden fountains, kind shades of trees, there were also the invisible ones, daughters of the gods, who protected them and cared for them. It was not good to offend the nymphs by destroying their groves or soiling their springs, or even by

intruding too roughly upon them. So we learnt to propitiate the unseen ones by going softly and ceremoniously. So too, we sought their good will by occasional offerings, a bowl of milk, a cup of wine, a garland of flowers, or a few figs or apples. I don't mean only such gods as Sylvanus or Vertumnus, who with Pomona his wife fills our orchards with ripe fruit. There were many others whose names were little known, and some who were only known to me. Oh, I loved the thought that I was never quite alone. And I always hoped some day to suddenly come upon the nymph and see her sheltering behind the branches of a forest tree, or bathing her feet in some stream. I made names for those whose names I did not know, for I knew they must surely be there, though I never saw one, never.

But for Ceres, of course, it was quite another thing. For her there were regular festivals both in the Spring and Autumn, and processions, and sacrifices at her altar, and sometimes games just as one has in Rome. I remember the August procession well; as a child I thought them so wonderful because of the strange figures that sometimes took part in them, men who were dressed up like wild animals, or who sometimes represented the gods themselves. And I walked in the procession too sometimes, following the long winding paths that led from Aricia through the dark Ilexes up the mountain side. Looking down I could see the procession below, still turning and twisting round the corners we had passed; and looking upwards I could catch a glimpse now and then of the white robes of

the married women who walked first, bearing small sheaves of corn with crowns of golden corn upon their heads. We had other festivals, of course. There was the Good Goddess, whom Scintilla worships in Rome, but in Aricia we called her Maia and there she had no priests. And there was the festival of the Greek Bacchus, whom we in Aricia still call Liber, and whose rites I never saw. You know the procession with the Greek rites was forbidden; but in the country, when the vintage was over, and before the grape gatherers went back to the cities they celebrated Bacchus all the same. I was not allowed to leave the house in those days, but many of our slaves would go. And all the night we could hear the cries of the worshippers, the shrill flutes, and the dull beat of the drums; and see from our portico the torches flickering like great fire-flies as they came and went through the trees of the forest above. There were wild doings too,—wild doings, and other cries than those that hailed the god. One morning after such a night I remember I went out early; all was peaceful again and silent save for the song of the waking birds. But here and there on either side of the wide mountain path that led down to the Alban Lake were lying burnt torches and torn wreaths of vine and ivy. Half-way down the path there was a little grass clearing that led to an altar, so old that no one could read the letters on the stone, standing before tall cypress trees. I remember it all so well, the short grass all wet with dew, the slanting sun still shining low through the glistening drops, the old grey altar upon which some

revellers had placed bunches of black grapes as offerings. And then my heart stood still as I saw him lying there, the young Bacchus. You see, I was so used to looking for the unseen dwellers in the forest that at first I really thought the god was there. There were two sleepers, but the other one I hardly saw, and have quite forgotten what he looked like. I had eyes only for the first. Little more than a boy, his slim body naked save for a twisted fawn skin, drenched with dew, his head and feet bare, his black hair wet too and hanging in short curls over his closed eyes. And fallen from his hand, beside him, a broken thyrsus. But such a beautiful boy. His skin not so white as marble nor so brown as bronze, smooth and shining in that light, such a beautiful creature.

Scintilla. And then ?

Pomponia. Why, and then ?

Scintilla. What happened next ? What happened to the boy ?

Pomponia. Nothing that I know, I went on my way. He was gone when I returned, probably gone home.

Scintilla. Oh Pomponia ! you are a disappointing woman sometimes. I love to hear your stories, but you never finish them properly. Does she, Gaditana ?

Pomponia. I can only tell you what happened. But all the same I never forget my Bacchus. He and Ceres are always together in my mind, and for other reasons too. You know that like Proserpine Bacchus too descends every year into the night below, and returns to the light of the sun when the winter is over. Below

he lies in darkness and at rest, but only to come to life again. And so does Proserpine. And so does the grain in the fields, which we bury in the ground only to see it come up again in the spring for our comfort. And so I think; and so I think sometimes it will be with us. We lay what is dearest to us in the earth and water it with our tears, and some day it shall come back to us for our comfort. Just as Proserpine returned from below to Ceres so other daughters will come again to their sad mothers. We have only to wait. Only a little patience and we meet again, only a little patience . . .

Gaditana. Poor thing, don't follow her, Scintilla, she will be best alone, she will come back presently. She is always thinking of her daughter, the little one who died after their escape from Nero's soldiers.

Scintilla. Poor Pomponia. That vile tyrant Nero! that red-headed beast! the Good Gods defend me from his ghost, and forgive me for pronouncing his name. Well, he destroyed many patrician families; but he did few things worse than when he made her a desolate widow, and left neither father, husband, nor brother to protect her. You were a brave woman, Gaditana, when you carried her away from that wrecked house and sheltered her.

Gaditana. You would have done the same. But it was indeed a strange turn of fortune that brought us three women together. And now here we three friends sit. You the freedman's widow, I the temple dancer, and she the last of an old and famous family. Life has strange changes.

Scintilla. She is coming back, so let us talk of something more cheerful. Pomponia, you have not admired my new gold buckles.

Pomponia. They are beautiful, and is the palla new too?

Scintilla. That old thing? no, why I got it months ago for the Saturnalia. Ah! now, that is the kind of feast that I like. I like a good jollification. We have as good Saturnalia in the city as you have in the country, much better, I think. The games last year were splendid, now weren't they? And then all the preparations are amusing, and I love going about among the booths in the Suburra and buying all the presents, the tapers, the dolls, the nuts, and all the other silly little things. And I love the supper parties, and the processions in the streets, and the new pantomimes, though I would not have liked to take Pomponia to see Callistus. Yes, the Saturnalia is the best of the festivals. I am sure my slaves think so. I like to believe my family is fond of me. At any rate my slaves do not leave me even when they are freed. And I give them a very good feast indeed. I make them all dress up, and some of them have masks. And last year they acted a play for me, and I was supposed to be Hebe. It was beautiful. They acted so well. We had such a good dinner afterwards, and I and my maid Phyllis pretended to wait on them. Of course as I was dressed as Hebe I went round and poured out their wine. And one of them,—he was not my slave at all really, he was that big porter from the fish market who is a friend of my cook's,—was dressed as Hercules

with a huge club and a lion skin. He pretended not to know who I was, and caught hold of me and gave me three great smacking kisses on my mouth. He said Hercules must thank Hebe with a kiss, wasn't it impudent of him? But he was a fine figure of a man, and he looked so well in his lion skin.

Pomponia. You are quite right to keep up one old custom, Scintilla. But the old worship does really mean more than festivals and jollifications. Do you not want more than that yourself?

Scintilla. I know what you want to say. Yes, but that is so difficult for me to tell you. Gaditana was mocking me just now about what she called my clean priest. He is a very wise man, though he is quite young. He has explained many things to me, but even now I cannot understand them all, and I cannot put them into words for you. He is of course a very virtuous young man, he touches neither wine nor meat. And even other food he sometimes goes without for days together. And then after a long fast, while he is yet fainting for want of food he has visions of the goddess, of the Great Mother herself. When I am unhappy, it is not often but I am sometimes, I go to the temple over there and tell him, and he comforts me with the same message. Never mind about to-day, this life is nothing. And even though you leave it unwillingly, the sacrifice is still there, and the gods will exchange your old life for a new one. He himself is giving up everything in this life, he sacrifices all in the Goddess's service. But that he says is different, and we

cannot all be priests. Oh, I cannot explain. Talking to him makes everything seem less troublesome and more hopeful.

Pomponia. Never mind, I am sure he is right if he tells you not to despair.

Gaditana. Bah! Your Roman gods are easily satisfied. And so is your Syrian goddess, Scintilla. I don't think much of gods who ask so little as that. What do you suppose they will give you in return? Just nothing. What can they? There is dear Pomponia offering a bowl of milk or a handful of figs to win a god's favour. What kind of a god is it who is satisfied with milk and figs? What power do you suppose he can possess when that is all that is necessary to disarm his ill-will? and Scintilla, who thinks to please the Syrian by going without her dinner for two days running, or by bathing in the cold waters of the Tiber on a winter's morning. My dear Scintilla, the Syrian is not satisfied with so little as that when she is at home.

Scintilla. Oh! Gaditana believes in nothing.

Gaditana. I believe in more than you know. You forget I came from a country where the people used to give real proof of their belief and do so now. You think that because the Roman law says we shall worship this way or that way, we are content with obedience. I can tell you that in Gades we still worship our gods in the old fashion. Well, that is all over now. I left Gades when I was a girl of nine, but I have not forgotten. We worship Hercules there and tell the story of his labours. We hail him as the saviour. We bring offerings to Venus and hail her as the Mother of the

Roman people. The Roman people will have it so. What does it matter? But we do not forget that she who rules us, and all things, is far mightier than any god or goddess of Rome. She cannot be satisfied with such worship as you ordain. What is the power of Jupiter? What is the intercession of Hercules or Venus worth compared to the might of Astarte? Though I invoke Jupiter, though I bring offerings to Venus, though I swear by Juno, like the best of Roman matrons, my real reverence and fear is for the Astarte of my childhood. It is not with doves and milk that Astarte can be contented. The Roman edict can say what it will, but the sacrifices of maidens still go on. Only the best shall satisfy her, only the spotless and the most beautiful.

Never was any god worshipped that was not really feared, and darker fear was never known than that which lurked behind the columns of Astarte's temple and among the shadows of her groves. Only the best and most spotless could satisfy her or appease her anger. Who should know better than I? My mother was a servant of her temple. My sister gave her life; I gave what I could never give again. Astarte must be served. Your offerings and sacrifices are only shams, fit for your sham gods.

Scintilla. Oh, Gaditana, how can you talk like that! It is wicked. Is it not wicked of her, Pomponia?

Pomponia. Our little Gaditana cannot be wicked. It is not her fault that the lesson of her childhood was fear. She is right

when she says it is that first lesson that counts. And she is quite right too when she says one must give the gods what they ask. But they will repay us. Oh! of that I am sure.

VI

AND SOME OTHERS

Junia. I am going to sit down and rest. Come, Hesione, we have done enough. At any rate, I have made all the wreaths that I intend to. The others can finish what little there is to do. And I want to talk to my little Hesione. It is ages since we met.

Hesione. Not so long. Certainly since the last Megalesia. But I confess I came to-day in the hope of finding you. The festival of the Great Mother, I was sure, would bring you here.

Junia. I like the preparations. I like a festival where one only meets one's friends, and is not obliged to rub shoulders with all the riff-raff of the city. The free Roman citizen is a very worthy person, but there are too many of him, and he is not very clean.

Hesione. It won't be long before he pushes his way in here also, and what will the fastidious Junia do then ?

Junia. Find a goddess who is still exclusive in the choice of her worshippers. Or find some other place to meet those friends who are too lazy to come to her. Hesione, don't you think you have treated me badly lately ?

Hesione. Perhaps. I knew that Junia would have a warm welcome for her friend and teacher, but marriage does make a difference, and I feared that a visit might be ill-timed.

Junia. Oh! I am not so much married as all that. Much as I like my husband, and I do like him, I am much more at my ease with my little Hesione, my little Muse, with whom I have spent so many happy years, more than I have spent months with him. My little companion and teacher who had hard work to keep ahead of me in learning, so very little older than myself she was. How old are you really, Hesione? do you remember, you never would say?

Hesione. Because I really don't know. Most likely about three years older than you. And as you are seventeen, I am probably about twenty. You always knew as much about me as I did myself.

Junia. Do you know no more now?

Hesione. Nothing.

Junia. You hoped to learn something in Sicily. Have you come back from Syracuse none the wiser?

Hesione. I have learnt nothing that I hoped to learn. So many ships are cast away on that coast it is difficult to learn anything of one that was lost fifteen years ago. The captain, who was saved, is now dead. So there I am, no wiser than I was before. My father and mother were drowned; of that the captain was certain. And he declared that not one of the crew or passengers was saved except himself and that poor little girl Hesione who was hardly worth saving.

Junia. How dare you say that to me,—who just loved the little Hesione more than anything in the world.

Hesione. Oh! I am not ungrateful for your love, and you know it. Though you do reproach me with not coming to see you.

Junia. Yes, I know. But tell me, if you are so sure that all your family was drowned, why are you so unhappy about it now you can learn nothing more?

Hesione. You forget, there was my brother. The captain always said he knew nothing about him. If I was saved, a child of five or six, why not a strong boy of twelve or thirteen. The captain saw the bodies of my father and mother, but he never saw the body of my brother. Oh, Junia! I cannot tell you how the memory of my brother haunts me. It always has been with me, but since I left you it seems to be with me more than ever. I think of nothing else. And that was why I went to Syracuse the other day.

Junia. And you learnt nothing there?

Hesione. As I told you, nothing new, nothing of the shipwreck. Though my stay at Syracuse did bring me other knowledge. There, of course, was the official record of the wreck; and of the numbers of the bodies cast up on the shore, one hundred and seven. Among them were some of the chained oarsmen. And that is why I am so unhappy about it, Junia. I never used to think of that possibility before, but now I think of it all the time. Supposing my brother was saved. Supposing he was picked up by another ship, or by people on the shore, who

robbed him of his clothes and sold him as a slave. Supposing, Oh Junia! think of it, supposing he remained a slave unable to escape, and was even now pulling at the oar in some hateful galley or dying of misery in some horrible quarry like that of Syracuse. I cannot bear to think of it, and yet I cannot escape from the thought. It haunts me always.

Junia. My poor darling. But why do you disquiet yourself by imagining such things? If he had been saved, nobody would have dared to make a slave of him.

Hesione. Oh! you don't know. You don't know what men do. I don't think I knew myself before I went to Syracuse,—and saw the horrors of that dark place of torment.

Junia. I always heard that Syracuse was so beautiful.

Hesione. What! for the slaves in the quarries? Yes, dear, hold my hands like that in yours, tight. It gives me courage. And let me tell you all. I am pursued by a dream. By two dreams really, but they always come together. One is of my brother, as I remember him best, carrying me on his back on the deck of the ship and pointing out the little white houses on the shore, as we sailed among the islands. Here we were going to live on the side of the mountain and keep goats. There on the edge of the sea we would fish and paddle on the white sands. He and I together. He was such a dear boy, with such a dear curly head. And the other dream is of the ship too. Sometimes,—not often, for they frightened me,—we would look down into the hold, where the

rowers' benches were and watch the oarsmen. A number of them were chained; and among the chained was one who was little more than a boy, not much older than my brother. He was at the end of the lowest rank and could see us when we looked over. More than once his eyes caught mine. And he smiled such a sad smile. Oh, Junia! now when that dream comes, I still see the smile, but it is on my brother's face, my own brother's, and not the boy's. My own brother, thin, half starved, with scars on his poor back and shoulders from the cruel boatswain's whip, and smiling so pitifully.

Junia. But you know it is not really so, it is only a dream.

Hesione. How can one say what is true or not in a dream? And sometimes it is only in dreams that one learns the truth.

Junia. What was the other knowledge that you got in Syracuse? You said just now that you had learnt something else.

Hesione. That is another matter, although in a way it is in connection with my troubles. So many people in Syracuse were talking about a new god. It seems that he was brought there by galley slaves, and now there are a very large number of people indeed who believe in him. The family with whom I was living,—you know them,—talked of nothing else. They believed in him although, of course, they believed in the other gods as well.

Junia. Brought by galley slaves? I don't think I should believe in a galley slave's god.

Hesione. But that is just why I did, because he was a galley slave's god. Junia, do you know

what pity really means? I don't mean pity for somebody like myself. You pity me, I know, because you love me, and my trouble is yours.

Junia. Of course it is.

Hesione. But pity, I mean, for some one you don't love and don't even know.

Junia. Yes! I do feel pity. Don't you remember how I used to cry sometimes when we read those Greek stories together. I still cry at the theatre, if it is a tragedy and the actor is very good.

Hesione. But that is not real. Don't you ever feel very sorry for real people? For slaves, for instance?

Junia. Indeed I don't. Not for ours. They are a lazy, fat, tiresome lot, who never remember what they are told and always behave as if we and our house belonged to them.

Hesione. I don't mean your own slaves, of course. But slaves in dreadful places. In the farm prisons, in the stone quarries, in the long galleys?

Junia. No, why should I? I don't see them.

Hesione. But those you do see, those you see fighting and killed in the Circus?

Junia. But they are criminals. At least, most of them are. You know, when you see them quite close they are generally a horrible-looking lot of people. One cannot feel pity for creatures like that.

Hesione. Do you think somebody is saying that of my poor little brother, "What a horrible little creature, all in rags, one cannot be sorry for him?"

Junia. Don't torment yourself so, dear. They certainly would never say it of him if he was at all like you.

Hesione. Oh! What is that singing?

Junia. The women who are still working at the wreaths, and strewing the flowers. Why, you know their song.

Hesione. No, it is not that. It is on the other side at the bottom of the hill. They are men singing. They are singing the galley slaves' song. I know it well, too well, what does it mean?

Junia. They are your friends the Circus slaves, arranging the arena for to-morrow's show. And there are probably galley slaves among them. I too have often heard them singing that song, though I have never listened to the words. Listen, no! now you can only hear the women singing.

Women's Voices.

Strew the roses
And again
Fresh roses bring;
Lift our voices
Once again,
Our song we'll sing.
Within the gates
The priestess waits
Until her path,
With roses white
And roses red,
With blossoms bright
And myrtles spread,
Is worthy of her holy feet and
solemn tread.

Junia. I should have thought they must have finished by this time. The procession, however, is not till midday, so they have plenty of time before them. Ah! There are the slaves singing again.

Men's Voices.

Pull the oar through,
Pull the oar through,
Curs'd be he who lets his arms slack.
Pull it through all,
Pull it through all,
Curs'd be he who spares his own back.
What care we where our ship is bound?
What care we if no port is found?
Let her swim if she will,
Let her sink if she fill,
What care we if her crew be drowned?
Pull it through all,
Pull it through all.

Junia. So that is why you call it the galley song. I often wondered what they were singing.

Hesione. They do not always sing the same words, but they sing the song at all their work, and more often with those words than others. I often heard them at Syracuse. And then I persuaded one of the overseers to take me among them, with the hope that I might find my brother. But that hope soon died. Indeed I no longer wished to find him. I could not endure to think he had suffered that misery even for a few days.

Junia. But what has pity to do with the new god, or with slaves?

Hesione. Because he is the God of Pity. He is the only god who puts the slave before the master as a worshipper. His only law is pity. He says to the strong, " Be pitiful, be merciful." He is the god of the weak and not of the strong. If my brother is a slave, he is my brother's god. He says to all the world be gentle, be merciful to the slave. And so I pray to him to protect my brother. What do the other gods care for slaves? And what do they care for pity? Don't you understand, Junia, how useless it would be to ask them to protect a poor slave, even though he is a slave by no fault of his own? Well this god prefers the slave to his master.

Junia. Of course, if you are determined to believe that your brother is a slave, I suppose it is well to be on good terms with a god who offers to take care of him. Not that I believe it would be much use to ask any god to do anything at all. Much better do it oneself, if one can.

Hesione. And if one cannot?

Junia. Make up one's mind to do without. My beloved little Hesione,—if I were you, I should try to believe that, if your brother was rescued, he fell into the hands of kind people who loved him and took care of him just as we all have loved and taken care of his little sister. If not that, that he was drowned when your father and mother were drowned; as you have always believed till now. Why do you make yourself unhappy by imagining all these unlikely things.

Hesione. You were always a comforting creature, Junia. I had few troubles when I lived

with you, but I always took them to you, when I had.

Junia. Because I am really the elder sister. I am full of common sense, and you are full of imagination. And that is why you find out new gods. Just as if we have not enough as it is.

Hesione. But Junia, it is better to believe in one than to disbelieve in all.

Junia. That it is not. I think my husband is quite right when he says that the wise ruler permits all religions but believes in none.

Hesione. Yes, but your husband is a praetor, and he only has to deal with religions officially. It is different for ourselves.

Junia. How is it different? You don't suppose I believe in all the old stories of the origin of Rome, and of the Roman gods. Why, you know I don't. But I do think that they are necessary for the Roman nation and the Roman people, just as the eagles and other signs are necessary in the army.

Hesione. Is that what your husband says?

Junia. Yes, why?

Hesione. I thought it was. At any rate you believe in your husband.

Junia. I do. Because, as I told you, he is quite a nice kind of a husband, and I really like him.

Hesione. But I have not got a husband, and I must have something to believe in.

Junia. So you shall, my little Hesione. I'll find a husband for you to-morrow. That will be much better than a new religion.

Hesione. I think I prefer the new religion. But you need not speak of it so contemptuously.

It is not one of those absurdities from the east which everybody talks about for a year or so and then forgets.

Junia. I am sure it is not, if it has found a follower in you. But if it does attract reasonable people and does keep up the number of its followers, it generally proves to be an old religion after all. Do you remember that Greek who came to teach us philosophy and was always explaining one god by another? How Osiris was really Dionysus and Isis was Hera, and Mithras was Helios or Apollo? And do you remember how we used to confuse him on purpose until he got cross and muddled all the names up together? Why don't you find someone among the old Roman Gods who resembles this new one? I forgot, he must be fond of slaves and criminals. I admit I cannot think of one who is that. But if you can, it would be more convenient than going all the way to Syracuse when you want to worship him.

Hesione. There would be no need to go to Syracuse. He has far more worshippers in Rome than he has in Syracuse. It was only by accident that I first heard of him there.

Junia. Well, then, to prove that I am not contemptuous and am really anxious to help you in your quest, I will give any sacrifice you like. Next time you sacrifice to him, and seek his aid for your brother you shall make my offering too. A white bull, if you please. Or money to his temple, anything.

Hesione. That is like your generosity, dear Junia. But the god does not require sacrifices.

Junia. Give money to his temple then. I suppose he has a temple in Rome.

Hesione. I don't think he has a temple anywhere. At least I have never heard of one.

Junia. No sacrifices, no temple? The worshippers slaves and criminals? Hesione, do you mean to say that you are talking about the Christians?

Hesione. Why not?

Junia. Because, my dear Hesione, you really cannot. No, you really must not have anything to do with them. They are wicked people. They do not believe in anything at all. Do you know, if they had their own way, they would pull down every temple in Rome? They are not at all like the others, why they refuse to . . .

Hesione. No they don't. I know what you are going to say, that they refuse to sacrifice to the Caesar. It is not true at all. And they do not want to pull down any temples. If you only knew them you would see what harmless people they are. Of course, there are some mad and wicked people among them, just as there are among the worshippers of the Good Mother. But you would not judge her followers by a few disgusting creatures who make her worship an excuse for begging and stealing. The real Christians are just poor, unhappy people, who try to make up for the world not being kind to them by being kind to each other. Listen? There are the slaves singing again.

Chorus of Slaves.

Pull it through all,
Pull it through all,
Pull all together at the bending oar.

Pull it through long,
Pull it through strong,
Through the fierce waves and the tempest's roar.
What care we what our ship betides ?
What care we for her straining sides ?
Let her rise, let her fall,
Let her not rise at all.
What care we if to hell she rides ?
Pull it through strong,
Pull it through long. . . .

Junia. Well, dear Hesione, you cannot say that their song is a very benevolent one. And from all I hear the aims of your friends are not very benevolent either. They are said to hate everybody. They cannot be good citizens if they despise all that other citizens admire. And they are like the galley slaves, who say they don't care if the ship sinks or not. If all Romans felt like that, it would soon be the end of Rome. Happily there is no chance of a worship like that finding many followers, but if it did, just fancy what would become of us all.

Hesione. They don't hate the rest of the world. I have told you, it is quite the other way about. And you know, if you were a galley slave yourself, you would not care either if your ship went to the bottom or not.

Junia. I see you are not to be persuaded to give up your new friends. I confess I don't really know very much about them. I don't see how one is to know about people of that sort. But my husband did say the other day that they were mischievous,—more dangerous to the Empire than any of the other Eastern sects.

Yes! you need not look amused. I shall tell you what my husband says as much as I like.

Hesione. But I like to hear you repeating your husband's words, only, Junia, you must see that you are in a position where it is difficult to judge. You cannot put yourself in the place of the unhappy and the miserable,—and oh! may all the good gods prevent your ever being in their place. I should never have understood myself perhaps if it had not been for my brother.

Junia. Well, we won't quarrel over a religion. We cannot ever quarrel, can we? But don't let them get hold of you and make you give them all your money. Then I really should be angry with them. Look, there is my old Chrysis waiting for us. They must have finished the temple decorations. Dear old Chrysis, she was so pleased to see you to-day. She looks upon you as her child, almost as much as she does me whom she nursed. I am going to ask Chrysis what she thinks about your friends. She is a very sensible old woman, and I dare say she knows a good deal more about them than you do yourself. Chrysis! come here, and help me scold this naughty Hesione who deserted us for so long. I said you loved her as much as you loved me.

Chrysis. You are two drops of honey, one as sweet as the other.

Junia. What will you say to this honey drop when I tell you who are the friends she has left us for? The Christians! Well, why, why are you silent? What do you say to that? Are you not surprised?

Chrysis. I am very glad.

Junia. You are very glad! What do you mean?

Chrysis. I am a Christian myself. I have been for years.

Junia. And I never knew it?

Chrysis. My lady Junia never asked me.

Junia. Oh! My husband was right. They are dangerous.

VII

ON LOVE

Glycera. What are you doing here and why are you not within the house at your master's side? . . . Too proud to answer me? Have you been turned off too? Did Piso get tired of your lectures? That's right, turn your back on me. I like it better than your face.

Antisthenes. Leave me, woman.

Glycera. Leave you, what do you mean? I have as much right to sit in this portico as you have. It is not your house.

Antisthenes. Listen, Glycera, the gods have sent me troubles enough without your tongue to make them worse. I have come here for a little peace. I pray you let me have it.

Glycera. Peace? you might have chosen a more peaceful spot than the outside of Piso's house when he is giving a feast. However, I am a good-hearted girl and I won't tease you. Look, you can come and sit in the corner with me. There! just room on the bench for the two of us. Listen, you can hear the music quite plainly. That is the new flute player. She is a friend of that nasty little cat Gorgona. But I do love that air that she is playing now,

It makes me . . . it makes . . . tell me, Antisthenes, what does it make me ?

Antisthenes. It makes you take up too much room on this bench, I think. And I could answer you better if you did not squeeze me so.

Glycera. Bah ! One would think you never had a girl on your knees before. I believe the reason Piso turned you out of the house because you were always after his women. Which of them was it ? Tell me. How did he catch you ?

Antisthenes. I have nothing to do with women, and you know it. Have I ever troubled you ?

Glycera. No, my little Antisthenes, you never did, and I don't think it was quite nice of you. But that does not prove that you did not run after somebody else. The only thing is that Piso would not have cared if you did. Unless you had run after me, which you never did. Or Gorgona. That's it ! It was Gorgona ! Ah ! you are blushing. So you have been making love to that odious little schemer, that hateful little Greek.

Antisthenes. Why, you are Greek yourself.

Glycera. Yes, but that is quite a different matter. I was properly educated. I was once in Athens. Who knows in what seaport slum Gorgona was picked up. I do wonder that you could make love to her.

Antisthenes. Nonsense, I did nothing of the kind. Still, if you must know everything, though it is no business of yours, I don't mind telling you that it was on account of Gorgona that I left Piso.

Glycera. Oh! tell me why. Do tell me all about it. Darling Antisthenes, do tell me, and I'll give you . . . I'll give you . . .

Antisthenes. I don't want anything you can give me, Glycera.

Glycera. Oh! don't you? Turn your face. There! let me look at it. Oh! That's a brave smile, and it's growing braver and braver. Listen, and I'll whisper something in your ear.

Antisthenes. Do be quiet, Glycera, and do sit still.

Glycera. Very well. I'll be quiet, but you must tell me all about it.

Antisthenes. There is very little to tell. You know my principles. You know what I was always telling Piso. Have as many women about you as you like, but no nonsense about love. Man is meant to be the master of all. Love is the trick by which women pull him down from the place of master to that of slave. Love does not really exist. It is an idle fiction of the poets who, never having any money in their pockets, hope to bribe women with an empty invention of their own.

Glycera. Rubbish! I have heard you talk about love before, and very silly talk it was. I want to know about Gorgona.

Antisthenes. Well, Piso believed he was in love with Gorgona. Of course, he was nothing of the kind.

Glycera. Of course, he wasn't.

Antisthenes. And he believed that Gorgona was in love with him.

Glycera. Silly fool.

Antisthenes. And I did my best to persuade Piso that he was wrong. As long as I just quoted the philosophers Gorgona did not care. She would sit there with her arms round Piso and say, "Come, Antisthenes, and tell us all about love." And then they would both laugh at me. But the other day, in order to prove that love was only imagination, I gave instances of the many times that Piso and Gorgona had believed that they loved before. Piso did not mind a bit. But Gorgona was very angry and made him turn me out of the house. You see, she didn't know that I knew so much about her.

Glycera. Oh, Antisthenes, do you know things about her? Do tell me.

Antisthenes. What would be the use? You won't get Piso back that way.

Glycera. Perhaps not, but I am going to get him back another way. And that is why I am here now. Antisthenes, I have half a mind to tell you about it. Shall I?

Antisthenes. As you like, I don't care.

Glycera. You are rude! but I like to see you curling your lip. They are rather nice lips, too, though you might use them better. Like this, or like that. Oh that's another smile.

Antisthenes. Do sit still, Glycera.

Glycera. What are you afraid of? Not of Piso. He would not mind if he did see us. Oh! I could cry to think how little he would mind. But it won't be for long. I will get him back. I will, I will. And you know, Antisthenes, it is all nonsense what you say about love. Of course it is a real thing. Why, when I think

of Piso I could go in there and tear that little beast Gorgona limb from limb! Treacherous little wretch. She just stole him. I know I was careless and should not have left him alone for so long when I went to Baiae. But what could I do? He would not come with me and I had to show off my new litter with the black carriers. What was the use of it if I never went out of Rome? And, when I was gone, she invited Piso to supper again, and again, and, I believe,—I believe, Antisthenes, that she gave him a love potion. You see, Piso is really stupid, and he would never see what a woman was plotting. And that is just what I am going to do myself. Gorgona is not the only person who can play that trick, and I know quite as much about love potions as she does. You know my mother Chrysarium . . .

Antisthenes. I didn't even know you had a mother.

Glycera. Of course I had a mother. And a very good mother too. Why everybody knew Chrysarium. She was the most wonderful witch in the whole of Thessaly. She could turn herself into an owl, and fly about at night.

Antisthenes. What was the good of that?

Glycera. Why, it was most useful. She could,—well she could do lots of things. But what made her most famous and very rich too were her love potions. Lovers would pay as much as twenty drachmae for one. And then she could do other things as well. She could stop the moon from shining whenever she wanted. She could make young men fall in love with her, at least she always said so, though

she was a hideous old thing, hundreds of years old. Old Chrysarium! of course she wasn't really my mother. My real mother died soon after I was born. I think Chrysarium poisoned her, but I am not sure. At any rate Chrysarium got the money when I was sold at Athens, because she came afterwards and said some of the money was bad and she wanted me back again. But the dealer would not give me back. He said, even if the money was bad, I was probably no better. And then Chrysarium grabbed me by the hand and tried to drag me away, but I wouldn't go with her, and shrieked till the crowd came and separated us. You see I didn't want to go back to Chrysarium. With her there was too much work and too many whippings. All the same she taught me some very useful things. She was a good mother that way. It was thanks to her teaching that I have quite a lot of money now. And that I kept Piso such a long time. Yes! and thanks to her I am going to get him back again. This evening Piso will drink something more than he knows. The boy who fills the cup is a little friend of mine. I have given him a small phial to pour into the wine when Piso has drunk enough not to know the difference. And then, Antisthenes, we shall see, we shall see.

Antisthenes. What shall we see?

Glycera. Why, Piso will fall in love with me again and he will leave Gorgona and come to me.

Antisthenes. In love! in love! There for once you have rightly described love. It is the condition a man is in when he is drunk, and

only when he is drunk. Wine and love, they go together.

Glycera. You stupid! it is not the wine, it is what I put into it.

Antisthenes. Exactly, you are always putting something into our wine even when you don't know it. Women poison the most honest liquor.

Glycera. Oh, you bore me with your ideas of love. What do you know about it after all?

Antisthenes. Nothing, nothing at all!

Glycera. Antisthenes, is that really true?

Antisthenes. What?

Glycera. Why, that you never,—that you know nothing at all about love.

Antisthenes. There is nothing to know.

Glycera. Oh isn't there? Antisthenes, wouldn't you like to know? It isn't really what you think, it isn't truly! I would like to tell you all about it. You have got such nice ears to whisper into. There's that smile again. I like that little dimple when you smile. And such a nice mouth, too, those lips weren't made to talk nonsense about love, they ought to be worshipping love in quite another fashion. Do you know what that building is where I am pointing?

Antisthenes. What building? Do you mean the temple of Venus and Rome?

Glycera. The temple of Venus, and many, many times have I been there, and many, many offerings have I brought the goddess. She has been a good friend to poor little Glycera. Yes, a good friend. But, Antisthenes, it is not of Venus that I think when I am there, even

though she has favoured me and given me many friends and beautiful things. I try to think of her and to be grateful, but I really think of her son. You won't believe me, but I would rather have his cruelty than his mother's goodwill. Oh, Antisthenes, you don't know what it means to have all your mind, all your heart, all your life filled so that there is no room for anything else in it. Indeed, one hardly knows what it is oneself until love goes, and life is all empty. But when it is there, then all one does is for love. All one's joys, all one's pains too. They are all good because of love. You don't know what it means to wait and listen for a footfall that seems to stop both heart and breath together. To hear the whisper of a voice that makes your heart leap again. To feel the touch of a hand that sets your blood tingling through all your body.

Antisthenes. Is that what you feel for Piso?

Glycera. For Piso? For that Roman lout? No! no, by all the gods, no! What do you take me for?

Antisthenes. Then why are you so anxious to get him back again?

Glycera. It is not Piso that I want. I want to get him away from Gorgona. What has love to do with Piso?

Antisthenes. Of whom were you speaking then?

Glycera. Why do you want to know? Perhaps it was nobody. Perhaps it will be somebody. Who knows? Perhaps it was the god himself, our own Greek Eros. In truth I think it has always been the god himself, and I have

always been in love with love. What does it matter? As long as one feels like that. Ah! when one feels like that, what does anything matter? You know what the painters and sculptors make of Love. But you don't know what he is in a girl's dreams. No painter could picture that. And then do you think she dreams of living with him in a palace? No, she wants to share with him some miserable shelter on a cold mountain side, a hard pallet in some wretched hovel. Oh! love, love! You don't understand, not yet. But, my little Antisthenes, you haven't told me yet what you are doing here. Why have you come back to Piso's house if you have quarrelled with him? Did he invite you to the feast? He didn't invite me, Gorgona took care of that.

Antisthenes. They did not invite me either. I only came to get a cloak I left behind me, I have lost my time with Piso as it is, and I don't want to lose my cloak too. It was a very good cloak, the only one I had. I don't want Piso's slaves to steal it.

Glycera. I know it, we used to call it the philosopher's cloak, do you remember? And you looked so odd in it with that baby face of yours. Oh, Antisthenes, you are much too young to pretend to philosophy. You are only a silly boy. But a very nice boy, too. What did I say about Love? That when one found him, one wanted to share everything and anything with him. The roughest food, the barest boards, the coldest fireside, even a philosopher's cloak, dear little Antisthenes, even a philosopher's old cloak. Listen! what a noise they

are making in the house, all shouting together. Something must have happened. Look! they are all coming out. What a lot of people Piso had! They are all laughing. Oh! there's Pannychis. Pannychis! come here! Pannychis! what has happened?

Pannychis. Oh, Glycera, why weren't you there? my dear! such a fuss. How I have laughed! They are all very tipsy, and now I am going home. I don't want to get my clothes torn, and most of them are fighting. But Piso! my dear! you should have seen Piso. He would try to kiss that little girl who plays the flute, and Gorgona was furious and pulled him away each time. And at last she snatched away the girl's flute and broke it over Piso's head. And then the girl began to cry, and Gorgona slapped her, and that was the beginning. But you should have seen Piso. The chaplets of roses had slipped down from his head and were hanging round his neck, and there was his red face, redder than any of the roses, looking about to see what had hit him. And Gorgona! my dear! but there they come! Look at Piso, he has got his chaplets round his feet now and he is tumbling over them. Oh! he nearly fell that time. Oh! Glycera! isn't it amusing? There, Gorgona has seen us, she's coming here. Ohé! Gorgona! are you taking out Piso for some fresh air? You had better get a wine cart to carry him.

Gorgona. Hold your tongue, Pannychis, I don't want your impudence. Who is that sitting there? Glycera! And pray what is Glycera doing here?

Glycera. Glycera came to see the animals.

Gorgona. What do you mean? What animals?

Glycera. They told me that Piso was feeding some strange and curious beasts for to-morrow's show in the Circus, and I thought I would come and look at them. I have heard the voices of the jackals and now I have seen the camel.

Gorgona. Camel! you insolent little slut you! you dare call me a camel! I'll have you thrown out by Piso's slaves. Piso, come here, do you hear me? Come here, look at that, that's Glycera.

Piso. Which is Glycera? There's two of them. No, I am not drunk, I say there are two of them. If that's Glycera, what's the other?

Gorgona. Nonsense, the other is that runaway Greek Antisthenes who is hiding behind her.

Piso. Antisthenes? why, I was looking for Antisthenes. Come along in, Antisthenes, and tell us all about love again. How the poets brew it and sell it in jars. And bring a jar with you, Antisthenes. Gorgona wants it. Of course I know Antisthenes. I was looking for him everywhere. He stole my ring, my emerald ring, with the head of Bacchus on it. My head with the ring of, . . . oh, my poor head! But where's my ring? Give me back my ring.

Glycera. You lie! Antisthenes never stole anything.

Piso. Oh, that's Glycera now, what is she shouting about?

Glycera. You dare say that Antisthenes is a thief. If you want your ring you had better

ask Gorgona for it. Look, she has got it on her thumb.

Gorgona. I am not going to stay here to be insulted by these very low people. I am going back to the house.

Glycera. Do, go, and take that tipsy brute with you. I don't want him, a sodden wine-skin.

Piso. Here stop, Gorgona! wait for me, I want my ring! I am coming, why don't you wait.

Antisthenes. Well, Chrysarium's love potion does not seem to have worked. You haven't got your Piso after all. Look at him stumbling after Gorgona.

Glycera. And you haven't got back your cloak. I don't care, I don't really want Piso. Did you want your cloak very much? I'll get you another, one big enough for two, my little Antisthenes. We will share it, darling, and you will tell me all about love. Won't you?

VIII

THE SWORD AGAINST THE TOGA

Pliny. Do we get more pleasure or more pain from revisiting the scenes of our former activity ?

Furius. Surely Pliny should answer that question himself, for who can recall more successes when gazing on the Forum.

Pliny. So you know my name ? May I know yours, courteous shade ?

Furius. My name, too, was well known once, though indeed it might easily be that Pliny never heard it. I was Marcus, the son of Caius Furius whom Domitian exiled ; but men knew me best as Marcus the Secutor.

Pliny. A Furius and a gladiator !

Furius. Why not ? Furius compelled to earn his bread might well have been something far worse.

Pliny. Ah ! forgive me, my surprise intended no blame. But surely to one who bore the name Furius other and more seemly careers were open. Had you no teaching ? Could you not enter public life ? A young man with some training in oratory might have won much honour and wealth in the Forum.

Furius. I might have become as rich as

Regulus, I suppose. I have known bad men among our gladiators, violent, revengeful, and sometimes treacherous, but never one so treacherous, so cruel, so altogether vile as Regulus. And never have I known more contemptible beings than the miserable crowd of hungry pleaders that followed in his train, like skulking jackals at the tail of a mangy lion. It was Regulus who denounced my father. Was I to imitate his example and earn dishonour in his odious trade ?

Pliny. But there was no need to imitate Regulus, whom, indeed, I loved as little as you did ; others, most excellent and worthy men, have found fame and fortune in our law-courts. I myself practised for many years in the court of the Centumviri not without honour.

Furius. With much honour, I have heard, but with little profit. Come, you must admit that to an honest man your law courts offered little prospect of gain. It was well for a man of assured fortune like yourself to spend your leisure in preparing and delivering long speeches in a dispute over a few thousand sesterces, but your occupation was not a road to wealth.

Pliny. And yet many a young man followed it with advantage. There was my friend Quadratus, for instance, a very noble young man of spotless reputation, he too . . .

Furius. Oh, spare me Ummidius ! he was a kinsman of mine, and I heard quite enough of his shining virtues and good example when I was a boy. It is my belief that Ummidius and your other friends only wasted their time ; and that my own life was more profitable to

myself and the world, as well as more pleasant to the gods. Yes, I say, more pleasant to the gods, and more honourable to myself. What pleasure could the gods take in the waste of their own gifts? They give a man health, strength, and sometimes beauty; and he throws away all in following an ungodlike trade of his own invention. They give him the love of contest and victory; and he fights with lies and juggling speech for his weapons, calling himself victorious if he can make the worst cause appear the better in the eyes of those he deceives. Are those contests that please the gods? Perhaps you will say that Mercury gave us eloquence for a weapon.

Pliny. Nay, I do not say that.

Furius. You don't say so because you don't believe in the gods; I know what you learned men think of them. But I am a simple man, a gladiator, one who loved life, but feared not death; and it is my belief that Mercury took pleasure in the Palaestra but none at all in the law courts. You remember what the poet Ovid says of him.

Pliny. Yes, but Ovid had more reason himself to invoke the god's favour for his tongue than for his hands.

Furius. The poet's gift of speech is quite another thing. I know your law courts and the kind of speeches that won success in them. I remember once listening to that very Ummidius Quadratus when he pleaded for the heirs of an old woman who had left her money to the friend in whose house she died. There was not a man in that crowded court who did not

know the rights and wrongs of the story; how ill the poor old lady had been treated by her own family and how great was the debt of gratitude that she owed to the kindly woman who had sheltered and cared for her declining years. But what did that matter to Master Ummidius, all that he saw in the business was an opportunity to wag his tongue. I can see him now bustling into the court, with his lank form and bent shoulders, his face pale with midnight study, his toga tight clasped to escape the touch of the greasy throng which blocked his way to the tribunal. Then taking his seat with pompous dignity and waving salutations to his friends. I can see his eyes anxiously hunting and counting all the important people in the audience, while he sweated with apprehension lest, tired by the oratory of the other side, they should escape before his turn came to speak. Much he cared for the argument, for what witnesses said, or what the law ordained. His speech had been prepared long before, and it was all about the sanctity of family ties, the love of a mother, and the pious affection of children. For three hours he poured forth his turgid flood of mellifluous phrases, gesticulating, and, like a bad actor, simulating passions that he could not feel. Well, I suppose the jury really liked that kind of stuff, or perhaps he had more influence than his adversary, for his clients won their case. Now, will you kindly tell me what good there was in all this. There was Ummidius spending long days and nights in ransacking the poets and orators for figures of speech wherewith to adorn his own mistate-

ments and weary his unfortunate friends. There were his friends—pretending to listen in the hope that he would some day listen to them. There was that mean crowd of idlers, who would have applauded far more heartily had Ummidius been a dancing dog. And the net result of it all was that a good woman was deprived of her rightful dues and a very abominable family was confirmed in an act of robbery. To my mind Ummidius would have been better employed if he had entertained his friends and the public with a display of swordsmanship. His health would have profited by the training, they would have been better amused, and a poor woman would not have been cheated for the benefit of a set of thieves.

Pliny. I fear you were unfortunate in your day when you listened to Ummidius.

Furius. Oh, I heard many other pleaders besides Ummidius, and they were all the same. Of all foolish ways of wasting life oratory is the most intolerable.

Pliny. Come now. You suggested that Ummidius would have been better engaged in a bout of swordsmanship. Cannot you understand that men can find equal joy in the conflict of wits, both as combatants and as listeners? Cannot you understand that there is joy in persuading your adversary against his will and that eloquence in speech has its uses?

Furius. No. For what do I care if my adversary holds a wrong opinion or not, provided that I am free to hold one that I believe right. Who is there that has any real reason to persuade his fellow-men except the poor beggar at the

bridge. And his best eloquence is silence, the mute display of his rags and misery.

Pliny. Alas! I shall never persuade you then if you care so little for the arts of an orator. But I am more open to persuasion myself and would gladly hear what you have to say in praise of your own profession.

Furius. I would not praise it, nor do I think it needs defence. Moreover, as you must have discovered, I have as little skill as I have liking for argument. I became a gladiator from chance as much as from choice, but it seemed to me then, as it seems now, that it was a natural destiny. We are all children of the earth to which we return. Nature gave me strong limbs, swift feet, and a stout heart, she gave me also the love of conflict, not so much for the sake of victory as for the sake of danger itself. But I am too little accustomed to explain.

Pliny. Proceed, I beg you, it is as much my business to understand as it is to expound, and I am all attention.

Furius. Well, try then to understand this, that when I fought as a gladiator, as when in my youth I spent long hours in the chase, it was not the prize nor the prey that attracted me but the danger of seeking it. The same nature that gave me the strength and skill to defy danger, gave me, deep in my heart, the longing to meet it. Can you understand that?

Pliny. Perhaps, though not in my own case. But doubtless there are men who seek danger for danger's sake.

Furius. You have never found pleasure in hunting.

Pliny. Very often. Indeed, I have always loved the quiet solitude of the woods. Many a time when my people were chasing the wild boar I would take my tablets, and choosing some shady spot, near the nets and yet in security, I would give myself up to contemplation and composition. I remember once that I finished a very important chapter of my history while they were taking three or four boars. There is nothing that aids imagination better than a peaceful sylvan scene.

Furius. Diana! Did you call that hunting?

Pliny. Why not? you would not have me waste my time in tramping through the woods myself?

Furius. It is not what I called hunting. Nor for that matter, was that the way I killed boars in my old home.

Pliny. Where was your home?

Furius. Ah, there was never a spot more lovely than my old home. Close to the sea was the house, and yet so hidden by the pines that its white walls could scarcely be seen from the shore. Behind it the hills covered with green trees climbed up to the bleak tops of the Volscian mountains. Before it the blue Tyrrhenian shone in the summer sun, and the sea birds chased the gliding sails as they turned and were lost beyond the mount of Circeii. All that I learnt seemed to belong to my home, and when I repeated the verses of Homer after the Greek slave who taught me my letters, I used to see the Greek spearmen gathering in their ranks among the sandhills or watched for the ship of crafty Ulysses stealing round the rocks

that strewed the shallows. I loved the sea. And I loved the long days, too, when I went out with the hunters ; the start at early dawn through the dewy meadows before even the eastern sun threw long shadows from the mountains ; the mid-day sleep in the steep wooded valleys where the mountain streams gave their water to wash down our frugal meal and their murmuring song to lull our slumber ; the evening air that blew cool on our faces as we climbed and hid among the crags tracking our quarry ; and then the welcome night when we stretched our tired limbs beside our fires. Fate drove me afterwards to wilder scenes, and more dangerous hunting, but it is to my first boyish ventures that my thoughts always turn. I have never seen my home since, save once when the ship, in which I was bringing wild beasts from Africa to Rome, passed close to the shore. I could see the rocks and caves where I played as a child, the paths I so often trod, the tall pines and a faint gleam of white walls ; but no smoke rose in the sky to tell of a welcome waiting me.

Pliny. I too loved my country houses. Indeed, I know not which of them I loved the best.

Furius. If you had many, it could not have been the same kind of love that you felt for them. I never had but one home. Sometimes I dreamt of buying it back again, for my gains as a gladiator were large, but I never did.

Pliny. You have not yet told me how you became a gladiator.

Furius. That is soon told. When my father died, before I had reached manhood, I remained for some time with friends in Pontus whom I

accompanied afterwards to Africa, where they went for their business, they being engaged in the trade of providing wild beasts for the games. From Africa I went several times to Rome with cargoes of animals, and frequently when I was there I would fight as a bestiarius myself. I had many friends among the trainers of gladiators, and delighted to practise in their schools, and perfect my skill with every kind of weapon. So it came about that I one day appeared myself as a secutor in the arena, and then again, and several times until I won great fame and found myself a favourite of the Roman populace. The secret of my success was not only that I was equally good with all arms but also that my experience with wild beasts had taught me much when I engaged with men.

Pliny. And did you, a man of birth and education, find pleasures in the applause of the Roman mob, exposing yourself and risking wounds and even death for their amusement?

Furius. Why so contemptuous of the mob? There was little to choose between your admirers and my own. As for exposing oneself in the arena, many a better man than myself, even a Caesar, found it not below his dignity. And I might add, with all modesty, that I made a better figure in the arena than most of your advocate friends in the law courts.

Pliny. But think of your opponents, how could it be right for a Roman patrician to stake his life against that of a man who might have been some wretched criminal?

Furius. Not less right than matching himself against wild beasts, I should say. Why did

you witness gladiatorial shows yourself, and applaud our master, Trajan, for giving them ?

Pliny. Because it was good that the splendour and munificence of the Caesar should be displayed in some way that was agreeable to his people. Also, because at the games men learnt to think lightly of death, and so became better soldiers when they fought with the enemies of Imperial Rome.

Furius. If you think that a good lesson, why quarrel with me for helping to teach it ?

Pliny. Because you were destined by your birth to teach another and a different lesson, to uphold the dignity of your class, to help to rule. You, yourself, said that nature intended each of us to follow his appointed lot, and your lot was to encourage a love of learning and respect for the aristocracy.

Furius. I see we have returned again to the point from which we started, is the profession of a gladiator any worse than that of an advocate, and you have said nothing yet to make me think evil of the one or good of the other. What orator was ever a better or more honourable man than my good Licinus of Ravenna ? He fought in more than fifty combats himself before he retired and became a lanista, and never a word could be said against him. His family of gladiators respected while they feared him ; his own family and his friends loved him ; both his sons were admitted to equestrian rank, and I remember one of them presiding as praetor over the very games in which his father had once fought.

Pliny. I am not speaking of freedmen and

their sons. What was proper for Licinus might still not be fitting for Furius. I once came across Licinus and esteemed him a worthy man ; though I confess the bestowal of equestrian rank on his sons was to my mind undesirable. And I would ask you how did the sons of Licinus regard their father's profession ?

Furius. There you are right. The praetor's guests did not speak of gladiators or wooden swords at his table if they wished to be invited again. Old Licinus was very proud of the wooden sword that hung in his atrium, but I fancy his sons made firewood of it as soon as he was dead.

Pliny. You see, not even the memory of a beloved father could make the profession a dignified one in their eyes. You said just now, that I attended games myself and applauded those who gave them. Well, I confess to you now that I had no liking for them, and that I hated all violence and bloodshed. But I consider them a necessary evil. Just as I considered war necessary, which I hated equally, though I began life as a soldier. It is a bad thing that vast countries should be laid desolate, villages burnt, many thousands of brave men slain or reduced to slavery ; but how else could the Roman eagles have been carried to where destiny called them. It is not a good thing that men should be trained to shed each other's blood ; but a wise ruler is compelled to divert the minds of the people, and one must admit that without the games and the circus the people of Rome might have employed their leisure in a way more dangerous to the state.

For myself I cannot understand the savage joy of witnessing men slaying men ; nor can I share in the childish exultation that sees one colour rather than the other carried by the chariot first beyond the winning post. But I do not deny that men are, for the most part, naturally inclined to such amusements, and that it is useless to expect them to be otherwise. Only I believe that most men, I do not say all, have a higher as well as a lower side to their nature, and that it is the duty of such men as you and I to cultivate that higher side and so to set an example before the others.

Furius. And when in the course of long time our example has become the rule for all, what will have become of man's strength ? Surely he owes something to his body as well as to his mind ?

Pliny. But I do not wish him to neglect his body. Even the most studious of men can find time for exercise. I, who wasted little time in such diversions, attained no little skill at playing at ball and kept my body in good health by the practice.

Furius. Playing at ball ! can you imagine what would be the end of a people who found their chief amusement in playing with a ball ? Why, not even the Persians were so effeminate. No ! The day that Rome loses her joy in manly games will be the beginning of her fall. Be sure of this, it is the gladiatorial games that make her greatness. You exalt the art of the orator : I tell you that oratory is dangerous to the state, while skill with the sword can only help to keep it secure. And I will tell you another thing,

though it may meet even less with your approval. The great gods would be ill pleased, if the blood of man were never shed in honour of the great city which they protected.

Pliny. You are right indeed in thinking that I do not share any such belief. Let us leave the gods out of the question and look at it only from man's point of view. Who made Greece so great, her soldiers or her orators ?

Furius. And who destroyed Greece, her orators or her soldiers ? No, that argument will not serve you. A country that is given up to talk cannot live. A Cleon who is half a soldier can be supported, but, Cleon, should he be nothing but an orator, will ruin the country. And Cleon the tanner was noble in comparison with some of your demagogues who aim at getting the public ear. You twit me with the low conditions of the opponents against whom I matched my skill. What of your own sometimes ? Imagine the fate of a nation where such men came to rule simply because they knew best how to flatter the mob.

Pliny. Putting absurdities into the mouths of your adversary is an easy method of getting the best of the argument. Nobody could imagine a state where men arrived at supreme power by mere skill in oratory ; or where their chief amusements were to play with balls. But let me point out that I advocate nothing so ridiculous when I exalt the profession of an orator and decry that of a gladiator. But let us meet again and discuss our question further. Perhaps some shade who is more lately come from the world of the living may help us to

resolve it. I will search an advocate for my side, and you should find another to support yours.

Furius. Agreed, though to make our combat really fair I think my friend and I should be armed with our old weapons.

Pliny. The gods forbid, in that case I would call you victor at once.

IX

THE ROMAN NEWS

Publius. Well, Titullus, isn't the Gazette out yet ?

Titullus. Only just put up outside the Palace Gate. They are later with it every day. Nothing new, there never is. All is quiet in Britain and Spain ; the troops in both provinces have sworn allegiance to Vitellius and are sufficient to maintain order. That is what they have said every day ever since the last courier arrived, so obviously it is not true. They must have got some news to the contrary. Good news of the departure of the corn ships from Egypt and Africa. Thirty-two male infants born yesterday, and thirty-six female . . .

Publius. Never mind the Gazette. Have you got no news from the North ? What were they saying at the house of Caecilianus last night? I hear there were several senators supping there.

Titullus. They said very little about public affairs, and they were wise. Who knows who is not taking notes at a supper table nowadays ? Now that Vitellius has forbidden any conversation about military matters, the senators find it safer to talk of other things. But I have not yet exhausted all the news of the Gazette. The

temple of Mars the Avenger at Perusia has been burnt down. A new bridge is to be built over the Tiber at Fidenae, and a cow at Ostia has given birth to a calf with a lion's head.

Publius. Nothing much to be done with that, except to throw doubt on the official news from Britain. Pity that the cow did not give birth to a lion with a calf's head, for then one might have suggested some connection between the portent and our Emperor.

Titullus. Not when he is at dinner ; I can assure you of that. But I did pick up one piece of news. The Senate is sending a secret mission to Caecina's camp to find out what is going on.

Publius. They would do better to wait the return of our own men. Well, the most important news of this morning is what I have got myself, and from a sure source. Tiberius Alexander, the Prefect of Egypt, has declared in favour of Vespasian and is already sending troops to join him.

Titullus. They know nothing of this at the Senate, I am sure. Shall I go back there at once ?

Publius. Wait, here is Flaccus. Let us hear what he has to say first. Well ! Flaccus, what news from the Forum ?

Flaccus. Not much. The city Prefect's men arrested two ship-owners yesterday on the charge of treasonable conversation. As far as I can learn they were discussing the number of ships supposed to be at Alexandria. It has made people very cautious ; especially as the prisons are very full just now and more summary measures may be adopted against other offenders. You had better warn our men to

be careful how they pass on their news. The only matter of interest that I have heard is that the Jews began buying all the corn they could lay their hands on yesterday afternoon. And they are at it again this morning though the Gazette has just announced large shipments from Africa.

Publius. You see, Titullus, the Jews have heard already. I knew they had been watching Vespasian for some time past. And as he will now be master of our corn supply, the Gazette news is certainly false. We have just heard, Flaccus, that Tiberius Alexander has declared in favour of Vespasian, and that Vespasian is probably already starting for Rome.

Flaccus. I must go back to Forum. My friends there knew nothing of it, I am sure. We shall be well paid for this. It is worth a lot of money.

Publius. That is right. But, while you are there, find out what they think of Vespasian. I know all the Jews and Syrians are in his favour, but what does the Roman citizen say about him ? And now, Titullus, before you go to the Senate with this news, I have something to say. You must make some more definite arrangement with them about payment, and it must be ready money. None of this pretence that we exchange news. They never have anything to give us that is worth having. Not even a scandal that is worth repeating. And what is more, nobody is interested nowadays in the sudden removal of a senator or two. Violent death is supposed to be their natural end, and nobody cares what happens to the Senate

as a body. If they want our news they must pay for it, like everybody else. At one time they were worth troubling about, but now all the real interest is centred in the Palace.

Titullus. That reminds me I did hear something more last night. They were talking about the Emperor's mother. You remember our last news of Sextilia was that she was still very ill, and growing weaker every day. They said yesterday,—it was the wife of the Court doctor who told her cousin, who told the senator, who told me,—that it was not astonishing that Sextilia was growing weaker as she was given nothing to eat. It seems that some time ago she complained of feeling ill after meals, and what wonder if she dined often with her son. Well, the doctor hoping to do her a kindness, told Vitellius that she should eat less. And Vitellius said in that case she would recover more quickly if she ate nothing at all. They say he gave strict orders to her servants and, as this treatment has been continued ever since, she is not likely to last much longer. A German fortune-teller told him his reign would be long and prosperous if he succeeded in surviving his mother, and so he is making sure.

Publius. Well, I see no harm in that story. You had better give it to Gellia. She can add it to her Palace news, when we get them. That tiresome Charidemus is later every day. That is the worst of those Palace slaves, they never can be in time until they come to be paid. Lazy brutes. Ah! here is Carinus at last. He is late, too. I cannot think what is the matter with you all.

Carinus. It is no good my coming until I can bring the race programmes, and they have only just finished them. Here are twenty copies and one that I have marked. The trouble I have had to get any copy at all. It is all very well for you to grumble, Publius. If you think you can find anybody to do the work better, I am more than willing to give it up.

Publius. No, my dear Carinus, I certainly could not do without you. Pray do not be so hasty. I never intended to blame you. Indeed, that was far from my thoughts.

Carinus. Very well, we'll say no more about it. I have a good deal of news to-day. The Glutton's brother is going to give some games, but the Glutton has got to pay for them, so they won't be worth much. Our beloved Vitellius is finding it difficult to get ready money just now since his last invention for getting rid of his creditors. You have heard about Seleucus and his son, have you not?

Publius. I heard they were in prison, of course. We got that news the day before yesterday.

Carinus. Well, this morning they are dead. An unfortunate accident. They were strangled in mistake for two other prisoners.

Publius. I think there have been too many accidents of that kind. I am not surprised that the Palace finds it difficult to raise money. Though of course moneylenders are less to be regretted than some others who have . . .

Titullus. What is the meaning of this? Did you mark this programme, Carinus?

Carinus. Yes! for once my own list of

winners is much the same as the one I got from the stables. Oh! I know what you mean, that is another piece of news.

Titullus. You have marked at least three-quarters of the races as Blue victories. Are you mad! Why, you know the Blue faction is weaker than ever, and if they win five or six races in the day it will be the utmost they can expect.

Carinus. I know, I know. But, you see, some changes have been made since yesterday. I will tell you all about it, but this is not to be made public. No one must know it but ourselves. It is far too important and dangerous a matter. Vitellius has been growing restive at the long series of defeats that his favourite Blues have suffered, and has said more than once that the Greens have been winning far too often, to say nothing of the other two factions. It did not matter as long as he only threatened the Blue charioteers with his displeasure; but last week word was brought to the Greens and the Reds that if the running was not different to-day the Emperor would see to matters himself. They consulted with the Blues and decided it was better to act themselves and forestall what our dear Publius calls regrettable accidents. So there has been a secret transfer of horses, where it was practicable. They did not dare transfer charioteers, of course, as the public would have known it at once. As it is, they are very afraid that some of the horses may be recognised.

Titullus. It is an infamy! That man is an infamous monster! How dare he tamper with

the races? Let him murder as many senators as he likes, or strangle his creditors or starve his mother to death,—what does anybody care, —but don't let him interfere with the racing. Vile parricide! cowardly cheat!

Publius. Calm yourself! Titullus, don't shout like that, some passer by will hear you, and there'll be trouble.

Titullus. It is all very well for you to be calm. You don't stand to lose half a year's earnings as I do.

Carinus. Nonsense, you have plenty of time to put as much money on the Blues as you like. You ought to thank me for giving you warning in time.

Titullus. Oh, I am not ungrateful to you, Carinus.

Publius. Well, hurry off, Titullus. You must be at the Senate as soon as you can now, and don't forget what I told you. We have news this morning, Carinus, that Vespasian has been proclaimed in Egypt. That is why I want Titullus to be quick. No, Titullus, you are not to take more than five programmes with you, I want all the rest. There, be off. I suppose they know nothing of Vespasian at the Circus?

Carinus. Nothing, I should think. I knew nothing myself, until they began to talk of him a few days ago. He has never been much in Rome, has he? Somebody said he was just a common soldier. And another man, a charioteer that was, said he was a very good horse doctor. And somebody else said he was once Consul.

Publius. Look at that black man over there,

dressed like a Palace slave. Isn't he trying to attract our attention? Yes, he is. Perhaps he brings news of Charidemus. Do you wish to speak to me? Who are you?

Syrus. My name is Syrus, a friend of Charidemus. He could not come himself to-day, and so he asked me to find you and bring him back the money owing to him.

Publius. What money? I don't owe Charidemus any money.

Syrus. He said you did, so I came to fetch it.

Publius. I advanced him some money the last time. Perhaps he sent you here to pay me back again?

Syrus. No, I am sure it was not that.

Publius. Well, I don't owe him anything, and I am sure of that. But why has he not come himself.

Syrus. He was prevented.

Publius. What prevented him?

Syrus. He was too sick. He said would you give him some money to pay a doctor.

Publius. Certainly not.

Syrus. Well, what will you give him money for? I know you do give him money sometimes.

Publius. I gave him money for what he brought me from the Palace.

Syrus. Tell me what you want from the Palace and give me the money; I'll go and fetch it for you instead of Charidemus.

Publius. I understand. Well, I prefer to wait till Charidemus recovers.

Syrus. He cannot recover, he is dead. Will you give me some money for his widow.

Publius. No, I will not give you any money.

Syrus. Will you . . . ? Ah here is Charidemus. Farewell! He will explain what he wants.

Publius. Well, Charidemus! I hear you are dead.

Charidemus. Syrus always exaggerates. I told him to find you here, and warn you that I was delayed.

Publius. You are always delayed. Have you anything worth telling me?

Charidemus. That I have. Three couriers have arrived this morning. One, a centurion of the third legion says that its officers and men have mutinied. But that is nothing. The other two got away from Verona. Antonius Primus is already there. He crossed the Alps with three legions two weeks ago and is marching south. Some say he has met Valens already, and that Valens has gone over to him and Vespasian, but there is nothing to confirm that. The Palace is getting anxious, but they still believe that Valens and Caecina will prevent any descent on Rome. And Vespasian himself is too far away to trouble them. The Glutton is not at all disturbed. He certainly has not lost his appetite.

Publius. Good, Charidemus. You have brought quite a good lot of news this morning. I do wish, though, you would manage to come to me sooner. It is very important that I should have it early. Can you not understand that what is news in the morning is often the common talk at mid-day?

Charidemus. I don't see what difference that can make to you.

Publius. So I supposed. What is that man Syrus doing over there, and why is he watching you ?

Charidemus. He only wants to find out why I get money from you. He does no harm. He can't hear what we say. Would you like to give me some money for him ?

Publius. No. I would not. Where are you going ? We have not finished our talk yet.

Charidemus. I have. Unless I have something to refresh my memory.

Publius. You know you have been paid in advance. Well, here is a gold piece. I hope you have something worth it.

Charidemus. Don't doubt it. Sextilia is at death's door, she has been poisoned. Vitellius wanted to make sure of surviving her,—you know what was prophesied by the German,—so he poisoned her.

Publius. I have heard that already.

Charidemus. You couldn't have heard of it. It was only this morning, when they told me she was dying, that I thought of the reason myself.

Publius. Is that all ?

Charidemus. No. The other story is a very amusing one. You know the Glutton is always afraid of being poisoned himself, and he has got three tasters to examine his food. Well, the other day one of them was taken ill and the Glutton was terrified because he thought he must have been poisoned too. As the wretched

man could not remember what dish it was that made him sick, they put him on the cross to help his memory. It was only after he was dead that they found out he was not poisoned at all. We did laugh about it. It makes me laugh again to think of it.

Publius. Yes. But I told you I don't really care for stories about your fellow-slaves.

Charidemus. Ah! but the story does not end there. There is more of it, but less amusing. The Glutton really was frightened for days afterwards, and hardly dared eat his dinner. Do you know what he used to do? He was so hungry that he ate the sacrifices. He didn't even wait till the sacrifice was finished, he snatched the meat and the cakes, half burnt, off the altars. And he used to prowl about the gardens, and if he saw a workman or a gardener eating his dinner, he would take it away from him and finish it himself. He has got over his fright now, and is eating as well as ever. It is a wonder what he can eat. It is lucky we were not all born with his appetite. Well, I must be going.

Publius. Good fortune attend you. Try and learn what is said about Valens. And come earlier to-morrow.

Charidemus. Don't doubt it. Here, where are you going, my little man? pushing like that, and who are you?

Philomusus Who am I? The insolence of these slaves is beyond all bearing. How dare you speak to me? To me, Philomusus, whose mother was descended from a consular family? How dare you address me at all? Insolent

dog! Gallows bird! I'll have you flogged if you give me any of your impertinence.

Charidemus. Oh! the little game-cock! listen to it crowing! Cock-a-doodle-doo! Cock-a-doodle-doo! Why, what a brave little bird it is! Perhaps you would like to whip me yourself.

Philomusus. Vile scum! When did you crawl out of the Gemoniae? If you were my slave I'd have you flayed alive.

Charidemus. I am sure you would, my valiant little porridge-eater. I hope you clothe your slaves better than you do yourself, little rags and tags. Mercury protect you! and send you the price of a bath, little grubby-nose! Farewell!

Philomusus. The insolent scoundrel! I'll see that he is punished. I'll go to the Palace and complain.

Publius. What would be the use of that?

Philomusus. It's infamous. These Palace slaves think they can insult anybody nowadays. It's abominable that they are not kept in order.

Publius. You should not let such trifles annoy you. Why have you come to see me this morning?

Philomusus. I have some friends dining with me this evening. I hoped you might give me the latest news. I like to be well informed as to what is going on.

Publius. You know quite well that it is not here that I give news. Come to my house after mid-day, if you want them. It is no use troubling me before then. Of course, if you were a regular customer it would be different. But,

you are not. Sometimes you want news, sometimes you don't. Sometimes I receive no money from you for more than a month. What do you say to that?

Philomusus. If I come to you after mid-day, will it be worth my while?

Publius. That is for you to say afterwards. You will find Titullus there, or our friend Carinus, and if you explain what you want, I have no doubt they will give it to you; for the regular fee, of course.

Philomusus. I'll come then. I shall be wanting some information about the Governor of Judea of whom they are all talking, Vespasian. He is the same man whom Nero appointed, is he not? Did he not accompany Nero on his journey through Greece? If he is the same man, he must have been consul about twenty years ago. What do you think?

Publius. I don't think at all. I know. If you want to know too, I have told you when and where you can get the knowledge.

Philomusus. Very well. We meet again this afternoon.

Publius. At your pleasure. . . . Stingy little impostor. Take care when he comes, Carinus, and make him pay separately for every item of news you give him.

Carinus. I know him. I pity his guests. He gives them nothing to eat, and makes up with what he calls conversation. That is to say he never stops talking, and they have to listen. Here is Gellia. What is she carrying under her arm? The gods protect us! She is bringing us that book again.

Gellia. I hoped to find you still here, Publius and Carinus too! Fortune has favoured me to find you both together. I bring you a fine sheaf of corn, all of my own gleaning.

Publius. Dear Gellia, you should have taken a slave to carry it.

Gellia. It is not in this bundle, foolish man! That is quite another matter. No, my notes are of a more modest weight, and I carry them in my head. But they are not unimportant. I was on my way to your house to have them written down for you when I turned out of my way in hopes of finding you still here. Shall I tell you what news I have, or shall I keep it for the scribes?

Publius. Better keep it for the scribes. But why did you particularly wish to see me?

Gellia. Because I want you to read this book again. Don't groan like that, Carinus, you have been most unjust to me. I did think you were a better friend. When Publius said he had given you my book to read, I was so pleased, because I was sure you would be kind to it. And instead of that you have been most unkind to it, and told him not to publish it at all. You liked my first book very much, why don't you like this one? The bookseller sold more than two thousand copies of my first book.

Publius. Listen, dear Gellia. It is not your book that is the difficulty. I am sure it is charming, like your own charming self. But you see, we simply have not the means of publishing it just now. When we published your first book we had more than fifty scribes at work, and very skilled ones. To-day we have barely

twenty, and very indifferent writers too. What can we do? They hardly suffice for our own urgent needs.

Gellia. You know that is not the reason. You could do it quite well if you pleased. It is the book. And if you were really my friend, Carinus, you would tell me what you have against it. Why did you like my first book, and not like this one? It is full of my husband's speeches. It is just the same as the other book.

Carinus. No, Gellia, if you want to know, it is not the same. Of course, we all admired your husband, but he was not an orator. During the last three years of his life, he delivered a series of speeches against some of his colleagues in the Senate which caused at the time a great sensation, because, to speak truthfully, they were very scurrilous. When you collected those five or six speeches together, and added to each notes and explanations of your own; when it appeared from those explanations that your husband's animus against his colleagues was due to his suspicion that they were, or had been, your lovers; when you further gave reasons for his harbouring those suspicions, which reasons, we must confess, seemed more or less to justify your husband; why, then, you produced a book which everybody who knew yourself, or the senators in question, wished to read. "The Speeches of Marcus Gellius Secundus, collected by his widow, with annotations on their subjects," deserved the popularity which they had. In this present case you have put together a lot of early speeches,—on the drainage of Praeneste, on

the decay of public worship, on the need of overseers in provincial meat markets—one duller than the other. And your notes, my dear, were duller still. Your husband was twice Consul, we all know, and a very worthy man, I am sure. But if I were you I would let his memory rest a bit.

Gellia. But I took such trouble over it. And I did want some money for it. I cannot tell you how tiresome it was to write.

Carinus. Well, I think I can guess. I found it tiresome enough to read.

Gellia. What shall I do with the horrid thing? And I did so hope I should make some money out of it. Look! Carinus, supposing I write quite another kind of book. I could call it "Days in the Life of a Consul's Widow." You know, I did not tell half the stories that I could have told. No, nor the best stories either; or I might call it "Days and Some Nights."

Publius. Do you know, Carinus, that is not a bad idea of Gellia's. She really might make something of that. Only you must remember, Gellia, to choose your friends carefully when you tell stories about them.

Carinus. Oh I don't think that matters much, as long as the stories are worth telling. Well, Gellia, I am at your service. I will help you if you like, and we will make a book that will sell.

Gellia. Dear Carinus! You are a good friend. Farewell, Publius! Won't you come with me, Carinus?

Publius. Yes! go with her, Carinus. I will follow very soon. I see a young philosopher

friend of mine whom I asked to meet me here. He is frightened of ladies and is evidently waiting for Gellia to disappear. Greeting! Antiochus, I am glad that you were able to come.

Antiochus. I came, because you sent me word that you had a very important and urgent matter to discuss with me. I confess I was curious to know its nature, for I cannot imagine what a philosopher like myself can have to do with your ignoble trade.

Publius. Really, Antiochus, a philosopher like yourself should be more courteous. What do you mean by my ignoble trade?

Antiochus. Running hither and thither to pick up something new or strange. Running hither and thither to scatter something strange or new. And what are those things that you pick up to scatter again. Rumours of war, of plagues, of misfortunes; tales of murders, of adulteries, of crimes against the gods; lying reports of cheating traders; false prophecies, portents, and omens of disaster. When our Ardeliones do this we say, "Poor busybodies, they have no other employment." And they do it for nothing. But Publius gets paid for it, and well paid too. You have changed what was their pastime into a lucrative profession, for the amusement of other fools and knaves, and the benefit of your own pocket.

Publius. What do you do, pray, when you go about the world preaching?

Antiochus. I search for truth, and spread the truth when I have found it.

Publius. Well, that is exactly what I am doing; I too go in search of the truth. And when I

have separated the grain of truth from the chaff of rumour, I spread it abroad for the benefit of the world. You see, we are both really pursuing the same end. However, I did not invite you here to compare our ways of life. I want to make you an offer. You speak scornfully of my earning money by my profession. Do you not yourself sell your truths for money? For how else do you live?

Antiochus. I have my friends and my disciples who supply my daily needs.

Publius. Which really means the same thing. Now would you not like to earn money which would make you independent of the gifts of your friends, and set you free to keep your friends and disciples as before? Would you not also like to address your teaching to a larger audience?

Antiochus. What is it you propose?

Publius. That you should come to my house and deliver a lecture to my scribes, who will write it down and send it forth in a hundred copies. Not every day, but when I require you. I would tell you the subject I wish you to lecture about; and I would tell you what I wish you to say about it. It would be more or less of the nature of prophecy.

Antiochus. Come, Publius, tell me the truth for once. Why is it you sent for me, and what do you want of me?

Publius. But I have told you.

Antiochus. No, you have not. But as you won't tell me the truth, I will tell it you myself. Until but a few days ago, you had in your employment several astrologers and you used

to send out daily prophecies of coming events. The Emperor has banished all astrologers from Italy under pain of death, and your own have had to leave Rome. The result is that a large part of your business has gone with them. You want me to fill their place, because your stupid Roman mind cannot distinguish between an astrologer and a philosopher. You want me to write prophecies at your dictation, and to serve your own despicable ends, and you want me to sign them with my name. There is no language in the world, Publius, which can sufficiently express my contempt for yourself and your offer. Farewell.

Publius. Oh! go your way. Go your way. A day will come when you and your friends will be glad enough of my help.

X

CONFIDENCES

Caia. So I whispered to him. Oh, Acte! Do take care, you are pulling my hair out.

Acte. My lady will not keep her head still.

Caia. It's you, you clumsy girl. You never can dress my hair without pulling at it. And now I have forgotten what I was saying to Tertia.

Tertia. You were just telling me about meeting him at the procession.

Caia. So I whispered to him, "Take care, or my aunt will see you!" But he got hold of my hand all the same and kept squeezing it.

Tertia. Oh Caia, supposing she had seen.

Caia. I was just terrified. Every time she moved her head I could have died.

Tertia. And then?

Caia. And then the procession came to an end. The crowd all broke up, and, of course, we all separated. And that was the second time I spoke to him.

Tertia. You never told me about the first.

Caia. Oh, that was the day he made his litter follow mine. I was out shopping, and I noticed that his litter stopped at all the shops that I did. So I led him such a dance, just to make sure, you

know. Then I stopped for a long time in the silk shop of that Neapolitan Greek, and he came in and sat down next me. And then, of course, I had a good look at him.

Tertia. What is he like ?

Caia. Oh, he is very good-looking. Not very young. But quite handsome, and such nice eyes. Rather dignified too. One can see he is somebody . . .

Tertia. Not very young ? How old do you think ?

Caia. Not old, of course. What does that matter ? Well ! he sat down there, and when the Greek went into the inner shop to get something else, he said, " Oh, Porcia, would that I had the right to clothe those dainty limbs." And I laughed. Of course, I couldn't help it.

Tertia. Why did he call you Porcia ?

Caia. Why, you silly ! don't you see ? He had asked the bearers the name of their mistress, and of course they gave Auntie's name. Well ! then he tried to find out where I was going the next day. And naturally I wouldn't tell him. But I could not help letting him know that I would be at the temple of Isis for the procession, and at the games the day afterwards. I suppose I did say something about our places in the Circus.

Tertia. Well ?

Caia. Well, he found us at the temple, as I told you, and he turned up at the Circus too. Oh, Tertia, it was amusing. You know what a crowd there was that day. He managed to squeeze into the seat just behind me. So, whenever I leant back, I just leant against his knees.

Of course, I did try not to lean back, but his knees would lean forward so. I couldn't help touching him all the time. And all the time I could feel his eyes fixed on me, because each time I turned, I saw him. I didn't really mind that, because I had on my prettiest dress. And he tried to whisper to me, but you know how difficult it is to whisper in the Circus, and Aunt Porcia has got good ears. As it was she looked at him very suspiciously when he forced himself in behind us, and if he had not been wearing a senator's dress I think she would have said something.

Tertia. He is a senator, is he? Oh, Caia, he is quite an old thing.

Caia. Nonsense, he is not old at all.

Tertia. But who is he?

Caia. I am not sure that I will tell you now. If you are going to be so idiotic. You think everybody's old, because you are only a chit of fifteen yourself.

Tertia. I am only two years younger than you, though you are a married woman; so you needn't give yourself airs.

Caia. Well! you can find out all the rest yourself.

Tertia. Oh, Caia, don't be cross; I didn't mean to interrupt; do tell me what happened.

Caia. Well, when he saw it was no use trying to say anything to me, he got out his tablets, and began writing. That was quite at the end, when we were all standing up and going away. He pushed the tablets into my hand and whispered something about an answer. But my Aunt saw him, and before I could do

anything, she caught hold of my wrist, and said, "What's that? What's that?" So I just put on my innocent look, you know, when I make my eyes quite round, and I said, "I don't know, dear Auntie, the gentleman pushed it into my hand, and asked me to give it to you." She just snatched it out of my hand, and began to read out loud, "Fairest and most dear Porcia," and then she stopped short and grew quite red. You see he still thought my name was Porcia. So she said, "What insolence! come away at once." Of course, during that time he had disappeared. And all the way to the entrance of the Circus, she kept saying, "Most impertinent! most impertinent!" And she pretended to throw the tablets away, but I knew very well she didn't throw them really. She was keeping them to read when we got home and she was alone. Well, when we got home, I was still rather frightened because, you know, I didn't know what he had written on the tablets, and he might have said something about our having spoken together before. So I sent off Acte to get hold of them. And Acte found them in her room, didn't you, Acte? She didn't take them away, for fear Auntie Porcia should miss them and ask questions. But she read them, and there was nothing to betray us. But there was a lot about his longing to see most dear Porcia again, and could she come upon the garden terrace at sunset, and he would be just below. You see he had followed me home the first time, and knew the house. Oh! my dear, it was such fun. For the next three days she went out on the terrace at sunset. Acte

and I watched her from the house, and of course, if he was there, he ran away at the sight of her face. She couldn't understand it at all. And the last time we could see her making signs to him not to run, which probably made him run all the faster. Don't giggle like that, Acte! you are pulling my hair again.

Tertia. And then?

Caia. Oh, after that came the real excitement. Acte went out and found out all about him. She is not so silly as she looks, are you, Acte? and she is very devoted to me. There, Acte, that will do, you needn't waste your kisses on my feet or you'll not have enough for your lover. Do you know where Acte has found a lover, Tertia?

Tertia. Never mind Acte's lover, I want to hear about yours.

Caia. Yes! but I must tell you about hers too. Look at the little baggage pretending to blush. There, Acte, I won't tease you, and that pretty face deserves heaps of lovers. Well, where had I got to? Acte found out all about him. My dear, he is Publius Varro the Proconsul of Achaea. And I have always longed to go to Greece. And he really is quite young, very little over thirty or so. He only came back to Rome a short time ago.

Tertia. And you have seen him since.

Caia. Why, of course, nearly every day we have managed to meet somewhere or other. But it was not easy; you know what my Aunt is like, and my mother-in-law is worse. However I was only waiting for that foolish little husband of mine, who was expected back last

week, and then I had my plan. I would get him to divorce me, and then I could go off to Corinth with dear Publius, who ought to return soon to his province.

Tertia. But what did Caius say to that ?

Caia. My dear, he just skipped with joy. Poor little man, he was so pleased. Poor little Caius ! you know he has been longing to marry that widow of his for ever so long. She has got flaming red hair, and a mouth like an oyster,—only don't say I said so. At last he saw his way to her ; and I saw my way to Greece, and as the wife of the Pro-consul, too, which was better still. So there we were sitting, side by side, holding hands and saying, " Darling Caia ! What a jewel you are ; what a pearl among women ! " and I, " Darling Caius, how glad I am to see you again," when my mother-in-law came into the room. " Aha ! " she said, " the turtle doves ! don't let me disturb you. You look very happy, my children." " We are," cries Caius, " we are happy, we are going to divorce." Oh, la ! la ! The storm burst, and it was a storm.

Tertia. Was she very angry ?

Caia. I should think so. She told Caius he was a fool. She told me, . . . well she was really rude. When I told her of my longing to be the wife of a Pro-consul, and my longing to go to Greece, she said she did not care a straw for my wishes or my ambitions, which was very unkind, and made me cry. Then she gave me a great slap in the face ; and when Caius tried to protect me, she slapped him too. Then my Aunt came in, and was told all about it ; and

she began scolding. Then they sent for Acte. And of course Acte swore she knew nothing at all about it. Then they said she should be whipped, and Acte began to cry. And then I was angry myself, I can tell you, and said that I would not have her touched. Whip Acte, indeed! why, she is mine. She has belonged to me ever since we were both babies. There! there! Acte, don't you begin crying again, nobody has whipped you yet, and nobody shall. Well, by that time, I was in a rage myself. Caius had run away, the little coward. His mother was shouting at me. Acte was sobbing. And my beloved Aunt was making more noises than either of them. I have got a voice, too, and I made them hear it. I told my Aunt one or two things about herself. You see I had been living in her house for more than about a month until Caius came back last week, and I came to his mother's house here. And we found out some things about the virtuous Porcia, didn't we, Acte? Anyhow she went. Then I asked my mother-in-law why, as she had divorced twice, I shouldn't be allowed to divorce once. Do you know, she dared tell me that I had the manners and morals of the Suburra. Insolent old cat. But when I talked about her own divorces it soon quieted her. And then she went. Of course, when they had both run away, I thought of a lot more things I could have said to them, but it was too late then. There, Tertia, now you know all about it; and why I sent for you to come and see me to-day.

Tertia. Poor dear Caia! what horrid old

beasts they must be. But if Caius doesn't mind, why are they making such a fuss ?

Caia. Well, that's another story. I only found out the truth about it last night. I can't divorce Caius unless he consents ; and it seems that something in his father's will prevents Caius from giving his consent. Caius can divorce me ; but, if he does, he has got to give me back my dowry.

Tertia. Well, dear, why doesn't he do that ?

Caia. Because he can't, poor boy ; he hasn't got it to give back. It was all spent in paying his debts. You know they have got very little money in the family now. His grandfather spent millions, and millions, and millions, on the games when he was Praetor.

Tertia. What are you going to do ?

Caia. I don't know yet. Perhaps I shall run away and follow Publius when he has gone. Caius will have to divorce me then. It will be fun ; and I should like that way best. Acte and I will disguise ourselves as ship-boys, and get a passage to Greece.

Tertia. Oh, Caia ! you can't. That would be silly. No one would ever take you and Acte for ship-boys.

Caia. Why not ? We have often dressed up as boys and we make very good boys, so there !

Tertia. You won't be able to do it, so it is no good thinking about it. But what is that noise outside ? There are some people at the gate. I can just see them. Oh, Caia ! It must be somebody very important, with a lictor. What a noise the lictor makes knocking.

Caia. Oh, that's only my own Aunt, Marcia Pompilia, the Vestal. I thought they would send for her. You know her, my mother's sister. I am not afraid of her; she is always very good to me. And silly; Oh! isn't she silly sometimes; she really is a fool.

Tertia. Shall I run away?

Caia. No, no, you and Acte stay here. She is coming now. Stand up, Acte! never mind my hair combs; stand up quick!

Pompilia. Well, Caia! Come and give your old Aunt a kiss. Who is this pretty child? What, Tertia, your little friend. How she is grown! Why do you never come to see me, Tertia? Ah! there is Acte. Run along, Acte. I shall have a little talk with you afterwards. Well, Caia, here's a pretty business. Sit down, children!

Caia. Oh, darling Auntie, don't you scold me too. I have been longing to see you. As for that, I always want to see you, because you always look so nice. I think a Vestal's dress is so becoming. Don't you, Tertia? And doesn't Marcia Pompilia always look lovely in it? You know, dear Auntie, when you all come into the theatre, or places like that, I always nudge my neighbour and say, "There! do you see the beautiful one? that's my Aunt Marcia Pompilia, isn't she lovely?"

Pompilia. Little flatterer.

Caia. I am not trying to flatter you at all. Everybody says the same. I was just telling Tertia how beautiful and clever you were when you came in. Wasn't I, Tertia? Oh, Auntie

darling, I do wish it was you I had to live with. I wish I was a Vestal too.

Pompilia. From what I hear, child, it is just as well you are not.

Caia. Oh, Auntie !

Pompilia. Oh ! Caia. Come, come, child, what is it all about ? Why do you want to leave Caius ?

Caia. Because he neglects me so dreadfully. I can't tell you how badly he treats me. He never does what I wish. Oh marriage is a very, very unhappy business sometimes.

Pompilia. But what is this about another man, a Pro-consul of somewhere ?

Caia. Publius Varro, Publius Quintilius Varro.

Pompilia. I have never heard of him. I have never heard of any Quintilius who was Publius.

Caia. Oh no, Auntie. He is really Quintilius, he really is. His is quite a good family, I know. I know you would like him. He knows all about his ancestors, and all about yours too. I do wish you would talk with him, dear Auntie. You would like him. And he thinks just as you do about everything. You should hear him deploring all these dreadful new gods and new priests in Rome. He cannot bear them, Auntie. He would like to throw them all out. Give me the old gods to worship, he says. And you know that huge, vulgar temple of Isis they are building on the Aventine. He said what a shame it was ; that the Egyptian goddess had too many shrines already ; and how much better it would have been if the

money had been spent on enriching the temple of Vesta. He has such an admiration for the Vestals. He always says, " As long as that pure flame is burning all is not lost for Rome." And he longs to go back to the days of Numa when one offered milk to Pales and sacrificed to Jupiter under an oak tree. Oh, he's full of poetry. Who was Numa, Auntie ?

Pompilia. For shame, child, have you been taught nothing ? You will be asking who is Jupiter next.

Caia. Nobody really teaches me anything, and that is why I am so ignorant. Oh, I do wish I had a husband who was clever, and could teach me things like that. Caius never talks of anything but horses and charioteers. I am tired of those silly races, and of being so ignorant.

Pompilia. Well, well, dear child ; there is something in what you say. Have you really set your heart upon this man ?

Caia. Oh ! Auntie, I shall be so unhappy if I can't marry him.

Pompilia. There, then, we must think about it. You needn't hug me like that. You haven't got your own way yet, you know. Silly child ! That little face was certainly meant for smiles and not for tears. Here is your mother-in-law. Health to you, Titia.

Titia. My reverence, Marcia. I hope you have spoken severely to this wicked, headstrong girl who is trying to bring disgrace upon us all.

Caia. Disgrace ? where's the disgrace ? I have done nothing disgraceful. I won't be talked to like that. There ! Revered Marcia

Pompilia, you hear how I am spoken to in this house. They have no respect for my family.

Pompilia. She is quite right, Titia, you really should not talk of disgrace. It is not at all respectful to me. I am not at all sure, too, that I agree with you in this matter.

Titia. What! you don't agree with me? Do you mean to say . . .

Pompilia. Do not speak so loudly. I am not deaf. I was going to say, when you interrupted me, that if you ask me my opinion I think you are acting too hastily. Don't interrupt me, please; let me finish what I was saying. If I have any authority in this house . . .

Titia. Which you have not.

Pompilia. Which I have, madam, and a great deal,—I shall exert it in liberating my niece from a marriage which is altogether unworthy of her, altogether unworthy.

Titia. Ridiculous!

Pompilia. It is not ridiculous. This dear niece of mine has a bright intelligence, a tender heart, a nature altogether too fine for her husband. What does your son do? Nothing but attend races and talk about races. What has he done to train this sweet intelligence, or to attach this, this, this fond heart to himself? nothing . . .

Titia. Rubbish.

Pompilia. You shall not say rubbish to me, madam!

Titia. I shall say what I like. What do you mean by authority? and who asked your opinion? Do you think because you walk about behind a lictor, you can have my head cut off?

Your opinion indeed! Who would want your opinion? The opinion of a silly sentimental old maid. A silly, interfering meddlesome old maid.

Pompilia. How dare you speak to me like that? I shall leave this house at once, and never will I enter it again, never. You ill-bred woman! you very common person! I knew your husband had married below his rank. He must have gone very far below indeed.

Titia. Well, he did better than if he married into your family, which has fallen to pieces with age. It is easy to see where my daughter-in-law gets her ideas from. A pretty Vestal Virgin you are, too, urging your niece to divorce and all kinds of things. I thought you were supposed to defend the old customs.

Pompilia. Divorce? and do you pretend to be scandalised at the idea of divorce? Why, you were divorced twice yourself before Caius' father married you. Poor fellow, he did not survive it long. Your first husbands were more fortunate, and got rid of you in time. And your mother,—your mother,—do you think we none of us know what she did? Made her husband divorce her, and in order that she could marry a great fortune; and when she had killed the man,—killed the man, I say,—went back to her first husband with the spoils. Oh! you are a pretty lot of people to talk about divorce.

Titia. What my mother did was for the good of her family. She sacrificed herself for the good of her family. She deserved to be honoured above all the matrons of her time. And it is a wicked falsehood to say she killed

her second husband. He died of eating too much.

Pompilia. Truly he did, truly he did. But what was it he ate? tell me that. Well, I am going. I shall not stay here to bandy words with you. You need not accompany me to the door, madam, I will excuse you.

Titia. I need not accompany you? you will excuse me? excuse me indeed! I hope I am free to do what I please in my own house. And as for you, you little minx, the sooner my son takes you away from it, the better I shall be pleased.

Caia. There! she's off, too! now she'll go and order some unlucky slaves to be whipped, and then she'll feel better.

Tertia. She is a horrid old beast, isn't she?

Caia. Yes! but wasn't it fun! But what shall we do now? Where's Acte? Acte, come here, Acte! Oh, there you are, what *are* you snivelling about now?

Acte. I don't want to go to Pontus.

Caia. To Pontus? Who wants you to go to Pontus, you silly.

Acte. I don't want to go to Pontus. I don't want to be frozen to death and eaten up by wild wolves. Ah! dearest Lady Caia, don't let us go to Pontus. Everybody knows it is a horrible place full of the worst barbarians and wild beasts.

Caia. Pontus! are you crazy, child? Will you tell me at once what you are talking about? or must I shake it out of you?

Acte. I can't—tell—you—when you shake me like that.

Caia. Well, what is it ?

Acte. It's Publius Varro, he is not going to Corinth at all. He's going to Pontus.

Caia. What ? Who told you that ?

Acte. Narcissus, the freedman ; I have just seen him and we happened to speak of Publius Varro. He says that Varro is in disgrace. That he took so much money out of his province that half the people are ruined ; and the Caesar is very angry, and says he is never to go to Achaea again. And he has been told to go to Pontus at once. Narcissus says that it has been the talk of Rome for weeks past. Everybody knows it. Oh ! my darling lady, my sweet, sweet mistress, you won't go to Pontus, will you ? I do so hate the cold, and it snows there all the time.

Caia. Of course I won't go to Pontus, you little idiot ! Well, that is the end of that. That's the end of my divorce. Well ! Well ! ! I wish I knew, oh well, never mind. Acte, come here. Find out if Caius is in the house, and if he . . .

Acte. Oh, but Narcissus told me something about him too. Ennia Rufa is gone away from Rome. She sold her house, slaves, everything, two days ago and went away with the actor Diomede. And Caius is furious about it. I saw him as I came through the atrium ; and his face was as long as that.

Caia. Don't be impertinent. Go at once and find him. Tell him I would like to see him.

Tertia. Oh, Caia ! Isn't it fun !

Caia. It's not fun at all.

Tertia. I think it is. You know, darling Caia, I am rather glad really. I didn't want you to go away from Rome. And I am sure Caius is much nicer than that horrid old man.

Caia. I am glad somebody is pleased. And now, Tertia darling, I think you had better go home. I'll have your servants called.

Tertia. Oh, no! I am not in a hurry. Are you going to tell Caius all about it?

Caia. I always tell my husband the truth. Tertia, dear, it is really very late, I think you must go.

Tertia. Oh, no.

Caia. What do you mean by, Oh, no?

Tertia. I want to hear what you say to Caius first.

Caia. Tertia, you must go, you shall go.

Tertia. Too late now, here he is. You can't push me out. Oh, Caius, do come and tell us who will win the races to-morrow.

XI

WITH THE SENTRIES

WITH THE SENTRIES

Bassus. Who goes there ?

Rufus. Pretorian.

Bassus. Stand, Pretorian, and give the password.

Rufus. Paulus.

Bassus. Pass friend.

Rufus. Tell me where I shall find Silanus. I thought to find him on guard here.

Bassus. So he is, you will find him asleep just round the corner. They have doubled the sentries to-night, and what is the use of doubling the sentries if one of them cannot snatch a little sleep. Poor Silanus wanted it badly. He supped too well and much too long yesterday.

Rufus. But suppose the officer of the guard came round.

Bassus. If he did there would be plenty of time to rouse Silanus. But he is not likely to. He never visits this post. He has got all the long staircase to climb, and there is no reason for it. It really does not matter if there is a sentry here or not. We are supposed to guard the women's apartments. But the real entry is on the other side. No one ever uses this one.

Where do you come from? Evidently you have never been on duty in the Palace, or you would know more about it.

Rufus. I came now from the Pretorian camp; but I was recruited in Alba Pompeia.

Bassus. I thought you were no Roman. You have a rustic air. Don't be offended with me for saying so. What do you want with Silanus?

Rufus. That is the business of Silanus.

Bassus. Oh! I don't want to know. I am not curious about other people's affairs. Only it is not often that strangers, even if they are Pretorians, are admitted into the Palace.

Rufus. You are quite right to ask. After all, there is no harm in telling you as you are sharing the duty of Silanus. I am sent here by the Pretorian Prefect. Do you see this stick? You know what it means.

Bassus. It is the Prefect's, you can pass the sentries without question.

Rufus. Exactly. Your friend Silanus sleeps well. No, don't wake him. There is no hurry. I will sit on the bench here and wait. I see you are well supplied for your night watch. Help myself? Thank you, I will then. That is good wine, that's very good wine.

Bassus. Old Falernian from the Palace cellars.

Rufus. Ah! We don't get wine like that in the city. I suppose you fellows in the Palace Guard get anything you want.

Bassus. Well, we make the most of our opportunities. They don't leave us here very long nowadays. Our cohort has been here a month, and most likely we shall be making room

for another very soon. Perhaps for yours, who knows! To-day for me, to-morrow for you. It is about your time now, how long has the third cohort been in the camp?

Rufus. I don't know, why do you ask?

Bassus. You don't know how long your own cohort has been in the camp? It is yours, isn't it? At any rate you are wearing its badge.

Rufus. Of course, yes! I didn't hear what you said. Well, I don't know, you see I remained behind at Alba Pompeia for some time, and have only just joined them again. What would your centurion say if he found this jar of wine?

Bassus. I don't know what he would say. I know what he would do.

Rufus. What's that.

Bassus. Sit down and drink it without asking questions.

Rufus. Excellent man. I will follow his example. I am thirsty this evening.

Bassus. So it seems. So was the Divine Commodus when he came back from the arena.

Rufus. What do you mean?

Bassus. Nothing more than I said. It seems to disturb you.

Rufus. No, not at all. I only wondered why you should have said it. Who told you he was thirsty?

Bassus. He told me himself. On my way to mount guard about an hour ago, I happened to see Caesar entering the private apartments. He and his escort crossed the round of the guard at the top of the great stairway. He was still wearing part of his Secutor's dress, and he looked

very hot and tired, and dirty too. What with dust and perspiration his face was as black as . . . as . . . well, as . . .

Rufus. As his heart.

Bassus. Listen to me, friend, I don't discuss the colour of Caesar's heart even with comrades. And you are not a comrade of mine. You may be a Pretorian, but for me you are a stranger.

Rufus. You are right. I should not have said it. You are right. But you were telling me how you knew that Caesar was thirsty.

Bassus. Because he shouted to the people inside the room to bring him something at once. And I heard the Lady Marcia's voice crying out, " Here, my Caesar ! here ! it is ready and waiting for you," and then she said, " How tired you look ! "

Rufus. And then ? did he drink ? did you see ?

Bassus. How in the name of Argus do you think I could see ? Do you suppose I rushed into the room after him and asked for a drink, too ? The Lady Marcia didn't invite *me*.

Rufus. No, of course, I didn't suppose you had seen anything. I thought perhaps you might have heard something. But no matter, what's that ? The door is opening. Look, there is someone at the door.

Bassus. It is one of Marcia's women,—Doris. What can she want ?

Doris. Sentry. I thought Silanus was on guard.

Bassus. So he is, my beautiful and adored one, but I am on guard also, and while Silanus sleeps, Bassus profits by his good fortune and . . .

Doris. Peace! fool. Tell me has anyone come here this evening? Rufus, a Pretorian? He should be here now.

Bassus. He is here. No, he is not, where has he got to? Oh, there he is, in the shadow of the column. Do you want to speak to him?

Doris. No. Tell him to wait. All is going well, but he must wait.

Bassus. Rufus, so that is your name. Do you hear what she said?

Rufus. I heard her.

Bassus. You seem to have friends in Marcia's apartments. Well, I am not curious, and it is no matter of mine. And there are some very pretty women there. Have some more wine. How your hand shakes! You don't like waiting, eh?

Rufus. I don't.

Bassus. Well, here's Silanus stirring at last. He will help you to pass away the time. Here, Silanus! Here is a friend of yours waiting for you.

Silanus. Is it so late as that? You bring me a pass. Yes, that is it. I did not expect you so soon. The Prefect said you would be here an hour after the second watch was changed. Well, you need not tell him you found me asleep. Between comrades, you know.

Rufus. You can trust me.

Silanus. Where's that wine? Ye Gods! but my mouth is dry. Where have I seen you before?

Rufus. Nowhere that I know. I have not long arrived in Rome.

Silanus. Yet I seem to know your face. Only the Pretorian dress puzzles me. I seem to know your face so well. You must be very like somebody I know. Somebody in the Circus.

Rufus. Everybody takes a part in the games just now. Even Pretorians. Even Caesar himself.

Silanus. Well, it matters little. Here you are now. What am I to do for you next ?

Rufus. I have just received a message to wait here for orders.

Silanus. Here is the wine. That is the best aid to waiting. Would you like a throw of dice ! Bassus has always got some hidden on himself. Bassus, where are the bones ? There, now we shall be happy, wine, and fortune's hazards. Women we cannot provide for the moment.

Rufus. I thought dice were strictly forbidden.

Silanus. Nothing is forbidden to the Pretorians. We are above the laws. If we don't make and unmake the laws, at least we make and unmake Emperors, and that is much the same thing. A Pretorian like yourself must not forget that.

Rufus. I had no hand in the making of this one.

Bassus. Nor had I, I have not yet been ten years in the guard.

Silanus. Well, I have been fifteen. If we Pretorians did not first set him on the throne, at least we have kept him there for thirteen years. And there he shall remain at our pleasure.

Bassus. Silanus has not yet slept off yesterday's wine. It is not good to talk like that.

Silanus. Bah! before a fellow Pretorian what does it matter? we are all good fellows together, all good fellows. Here, I drink to the health of Caesar. Come, my faithful comrade, you don't refuse that?

Rufus. I drink to his speedy release from all evils.

Silanus. Well, that is the same thing, is it not? And we are all good fellows and good friends together. And now let's have a friendly throw with the dice. What's your stake, Rufus? You shall fix it. Eh, Rufus? you don't seem to answer to your name very easily? It is your name, isn't it? The Prefect said it was. Always must believe what the Prefect says. Well, what's your stake.

Rufus. Anything you please. Two gold ounces?

Silanus. Two gold ounces! Do you think I have got two gold ounces on me? Not I.

Rufus. Well, any stake you please. I don't care.

Silanus. But I do. I'm not going to play with a man who doesn't care what stake he plays. Anything might happen. Just suppose I was playing for that. I throw. Lydia! I throw for you. Where has the fourth bone gone? There it is fallen off the bench. Doesn't matter. It counts all the same. What does that make? The dog? You hold your tongue, Bassus. I am not playing with you. But it's a bad throw all the same. Two ones, a three, and a four. I should have lost for certain. You see how

dangerous it is to play for such high stakes. I lost a lot of money last night. And then on duty all this afternoon. It's a dog's life.

Rufus. You were at the Circus this afternoon?

Silanus. I was, and saw that most famous Secutor, Marcus Aurelius Commodus, conquer and graciously spare the lives of eight Retiarii. Very pretty play, very pretty. Our Divine Commodus is a real artist. The last two were not so fortunate. Perhaps Caesar was tired. He carved them badly. Well, they died in a good cause, for I heard in the Circus that the god-like master has now accomplished exactly six hundred victories. I think they said six hundred. It might have been more. Might have been six thousand. They also said the supply of Retiarii was running short. At first all the Gladiator School wanted to play with the net and oblige Caesar. But lately there have been so many accidents that the game is not so popular. After all a sham trident made of lead is a poor weapon. What vexed Caesar to-day was that the ninth man tripped and fell upon his trident, and the thing twisted all shapes. The people laughed, they could not help it. That was the end of that Retiarius, and of the next one too. Well! the gods send him some better sport. What do you say, my silent friend? Give me the wine jar. I am still thirsty. What's that, Bassus? I have had enough? No, I have not. Why don't you drink your own share?

Rufus. Did you ever see the Divine Commodus in the character of Hercules?

Silanus. I did, more than once. I also saw the Nemean lion before he was brought on. And I saw the Lernean Hydra when it was dragged off. Two of the Hydra's heads were friends of mine. Poor wretches! and then Bassus says I have had enough to drink!

Bassus. You have had more than enough. And you are talking more than enough.

Silanus. Oh, our comrade Rufus is safe enough. Aren't you, Rufus? But I heard a strange tale to-day. I am not going to tell you that. No, I am a little drunk, not more than a soldier should be. Not drunk enough for that.

Bassus. That's right, try and keep quiet. You have talked quite enough.

Silanus. No, I have not, you are quite mistaken. I shall tell you the story now just to show you. Besides, I want to know what you think of it. You and our comrade Rufus. Clever man Rufus, at least he looks to me like a clever man. I'd like to have his opinion.

Bassus. Oh, you are beyond even a god's help.

Silanus. Never mind him, Rufus. He is too young. Doesn't know how prudent we veterans are. Well, it is a story which concerns us Pretorians. They say that Caesar does not trust any of us now, and is getting together a lot of men from the Gladiator School as a body guard. Have you heard that? No? Well, I believe it is true. They said he was going to have out his new guard to-morrow. The orders are that two hundred Gladiators come here to-morrow, and that Caesar will march at their

head in his Secutor armour from the Palace to the Capitol. Then he will kill the two new consuls, and declare himself consul in their place. Do you believe it ?

Rufus. Why not ?

Silanus. As you say, why not ? But what I say is that I don't like this guard of Gladiators. If he wants to kill consuls he ought to do it properly. If he wants protection he ought to come to the Pretorians. I don't like it. It's an insult to the Pretorians.

Rufus. Perhaps he thought that the Pretorians might refuse to obey him. Killing criminals and Gladiators in the arena, or a few rich senators at home, is one thing. Killing the two consuls is quite another.

Silanus. Well, he oughtn't to think so. The Pretorians are good soldiers. Cut anybody's throat when they are told to. Cut Caesar's own throat, if he tells them.

Rufus. Would they cut Caesar's throat ? tell me, would your comrades . . .

Bassus. Stop talking, you two. Here, Silanus, you have talked quite enough nonsense. You had better go to sleep again if that is all you can do. You have drunk too much wine.

Silanus. You leave me alone. I know what I am doing. And so does Rufus. I said Rufus looked a clever man. Looks a very strong man, too. His arms and hands are as big as, as Hercules. He could strangle the Nemean lion with one hand. Couldn't you, Rufus ? Oh, you need not hide them. He is a clever man, but he is modest. Not a good soldier, though.

Good soldiers are not modest. You don't mind my saying you are strong? of course you don't. But I haven't told you all my story yet, and the most important part is to come. Why did you look so annoyed when I said you were like Hercules? No insult to a soldier to say he is like Hercules.

Rufus. I was not annoyed. Not at all, what was the end of your story?

Silanus. I am not sure I shall tell it. Bassus was right.

Bassus. Thank the gods!

Silanus. Why do you thank the gods? You don't know what the end of the story was. Do you?

Bassus. No, and I don't want to, if it is as foolish as the beginning,—just Circus gossip.

Silanus. It's nothing of the kind. More than that, it just proves that the first part of my story is true. And, what is more, it proves what I am saying about Caesar and the Pretorians. I don't like it. I am sure Rufus will say the same as I do. He won't like it either.

Rufus. How can I say anything if I don't know the story.

Silanus. Well, I'll tell it to you. If Bassus doesn't want to hear it he needn't. He can stop his ears. Well, I was told. Mind you, I have only just been told this; not long before I came on guard this evening. I heard this in the Palace. It is not what Bassus calls Circus gossip. And the woman who told me knows what she is talking about. She says that it is quite true what I told you about Caesar and the consuls, and that Marcia and the Chamberlain

Eclectus are altogether against it. They were arguing with Caesar about it all yesterday, and last night they called in Laetus, our Prefect, to help them. But they couldn't persuade Caesar. He only got very angry, and said they were all in a plot against him. Marcia wept, and then there was a reconciliation. But they didn't trust him, and they were quite right. You know that little brat who is always in and out of Caesar's room, the only one that he seems to care for? They say it is Marcia's, but who knows. Well, she picked up Caesar's tablets, he must have dropped them by accident, and was playing with them when Marcia took them away from her. The first thing she found in them was a new list of Caesar's enemies. The two consuls, of course, but at the head of the lot, Laetus, Eclectus, and Marcia herself. Now, what do you think of that? I don't believe you are listening to me. One would think you had heard the story before.

Rufus. No, no, I was listening. I was very interested.

Silanus. That's just what I say. It is very interesting. Bassus, do you hear? He says it's very interesting, and so do I. That's all. You are shivering, Rufus! Are you so cold?

Rufus. It is cold here.

Bassus. Sit close to the brazier and warm yourself. Waiting is always a cold business.

Rufus. Ye gods! why do I wait? I am not obliged to wait. I am half-minded to go and wait no longer.

Silanus. Mustn't do that. Prefect's orders. Prefect says you are to come, you come like a

good soldier. Prefect says you are to go. You go,—but not before the Prefect says so.

Rufus. You could not stop me.

Silanus. Not while you carry that little stick. Don't you know that? Why, that little stick makes you my superior officer. Think of that. Why, you could give me orders. You could say, "Silanus, I order you to drink," and I should have to drink. Must obey orders. Or you could say, "Give me those dice," and I should . . .

Rufus. Yes, give me those dice. I will have a throw to decide. Here, throw them yourself for me. Venus and all numbers above fourteen, I go. All under fourteen, I stay. Well, what is it?

Silanus. Wait a minute. Must throw them properly. Whose name shall I call? Anybody's? Well, I'll do the best I can for you. Good fortune! Let us see. Four, two, two, and one. Nine, you stay.

Rufus. So fate will have it. Here, let me have the wine.

Bassus. Your hands are still cold. There is someone at the door again. I can hear them on the inside. Stand up quick, Silanus. It is Laetus, the Prefect himself. Look out, that is all right, don't speak if you can help it.

Laetus. Who is on guard here?

Bassus. I am, Prefect, Bassus, 2nd Company, Palace Guard, and Silanus, 2nd Company, Palace Guard.

Laetus. Fall out, you two men. Stand at the head of the stairs. Send me that man who has been waiting for me.

Bassus. Here, Rufus, the Prefect is asking for you. Come, Silanus.

Laetus. You have been here long ?

Rufus. A great deal too long. What an idea, to keep me waiting like that. I very nearly went away. First, there comes a woman, who says that all is well, but I must wait. Well, I waited, but why should I wait if all was well ? What need is there of my help ?

Laetus. There is need of you. All is well in one way, but not in another. The cup was drugged, but they dared not add anything to it. He sleeps, or rather he is half asleep. He knows nothing, sees nothing, hears nothing. Yours is an easy task.

Rufus. Why should it be my task ? Is there no sword at your side ?

Laetus. You know why you were chosen for this. You know there must be no wound that can accuse a sword. Why, man, what ails you ? Why so faint hearted ? You are not a novice trembling before the first trial of your courage. Come, Marcia is waiting. She cannot leave him before your work is done. She is watching, she will be watching. I had a message for you. Bid him have courage, she said, and to remember his brother's blood. You have not forgotten ? There, come.

Rufus. I am coming. Wait, let me wet my lips with a drop of wine. There, that's better, I am ready.

Laetus. Here, sentry. Come back. Let no one pass in or out until I pass myself. Come, man.

Silanus. They have both gone in. Now, what does that mean ? First of all, what is

Laetus doing on that side of the door? He has got no business there, and he has taken Rufus with him? Why? What is happening, Bassus?

Bassus. I don't know. All I know, is that you have had a very narrow escape to-night. If Laetus had not been thinking of something more important, he must have seen you were drunk. Why man, you have even got your helmet crooked. Try and get sober before he comes back again. He said he was coming back.

Silanus. Oh! I am sober enough now. You are a good comrade, Bassus, and I won't forget it. But what is Laetus doing in this part of the Palace? And at this hour, too?

Bassus. Well, if it comes to that, what is our friend Rufus doing there? Why is a soldier of the third cohort walking about the Palace with the Prefect's stick in his hand?

Silanus. By Jupiter! I have it. By Mars and Jupiter! I have it, what a fool I was. I thought I knew his face. All the time I was thinking, where have I seen you before? His name is not Rufus, and he is not a Pretorian at all.

Bassus. Well, that doesn't surprise me. I thought that myself. But if he is not Rufus, who is he?

Silanus. Narcissus the wrestler. If I had not recognised his face, I ought to have known his shoulders.

Bassus. But what is Narcissus the wrestler doing here in the Palace, disguised as a Pretorian.

Silanus. That I cannot answer. But he is Narcissus, I could swear to his face. Why, I have seen him a score of times. Though, of course, not so close as to-night.

Bassus. Narcissus? I have seen him myself once or twice, but I should not have known him again. They are all rather alike, those wrestlers. Wasn't there some story about his brother?

Silanus. Of course there was. He was one of Caesar's Gladiator friends. The father was a freedman of Marcus Aurelius, a very decent old Greek. It was Commodus who obliged the sons to become one a wrestler, and the other a Gladiator. And it was Commodus himself who killed the Gladiator. He did it one day that he was in an ill-humour. He was practising throws with the javelin, and throwing badly. Narcissus' brother was some two or three paces behind him. Nobody else heard him, but Caesar pretended that the boy laughed. He turned right round and stabbed him through the heart. "I can aim straight enough when I please," he said. Oh, you must have heard the story. Both brothers were rather favourites with the public, and Caesar did not appear in the Circus for many days after that.

Bassus. That accounts for what he said about Caesar. So that is the story, is it? And what do you suppose Laetus is doing?

Silanus. I don't know, and it is no business of mine. I don't trouble about other people's affairs. I just obey orders. Discipline and regularity, that is what I believe in, That is why I didn't like that man Rufus; too irregular.

Who ever heard of a Pretorian soldier carrying about a lot of gold like that? I knew there was something wrong. And he had the gold, too, I am sure of it. I have never had so much gold as that. Those wrestlers and charioteers are just made of money. We poor soldiers don't get as much pay in a whole year as they do in a day. And then there's another thing I don't like.

Bassus. What's that?

Silanus. That's irregular, too. What is Laetus, our Prefect, doing with wrestlers and people of that kind? Hasn't he got a few thousand Pretorians at his orders? Why does he go outside for a wrestler and dress him up as a Pretorian? I don't like it. And I'll tell you why I don't like it. We receive our orders from Laetus, don't we? But from whom does Laetus receive his orders? Tell me that? Why, he receives them from us. When we Pretorians wish to have changes made, we say so. Now we haven't been talking about any changes. We haven't been giving any orders. What is Laetus doing then?

Bassus. Well, as you have already said, it is no business of ours.

Silanus. I said so. But I am not so sure. What is that noise? they are making a fine uproar inside. All the women seem to be running about shouting at once. Can you hear what they are crying out?

Bassus. No, you can hear nothing through the door. Probably Caesar is at supper, and something has gone wrong. They make a lot of noise sometimes. You would think half the slaves of the Palace were being tortured at once,

and next morning you hear that nothing has happened at all.

Silanus. That's true. But all the same, something has happened this time. I am sure of it. Listen, that is a woman wailing.

Bassus. Well, that is not extraordinary.

Silanus. No, no, I am right. That is not an ordinary cry. That is a regular wail of lamentation. Listen, man, you have never heard that sound apart from a funeral. There is someone at the door. Now we shall know. It is Eclectus. Stand there!

Eclectus. What do you mean? don't you know who I am, I am the Chamberlain.

Bassus. Prefect's orders. To let no one pass this door, in or out.

Eclectus. I must pass, and at once.

Bassus. Nobody passes.

Eclectus. What folly is this. Ah, thanks to the gods! Here is Laetus himself. Your sentries won't let me pass.

Laetus. I told them to stop all passage till I came. It is well, men. I will stand at the door myself. Go back to the stair-head, and wait orders. Listen, Eclectus, we must hurry. Pertinax must have word from us at once. I will get him proclaimed in the Pretorian camp before the night is over. You must come to him with me. There is need of haste. Meanwhile let Marcia dispose of everything in the Palace as she thinks best.

Eclectus. I have already arranged with her to give the necessary orders.

Laetus. Let us start then. Sentry, you will let no one pass into the Palace, in or out,

without the authority of the Lady Marcia. I am now on my way to the Pretorian camp to announce to our comrades the sad news of our beloved master's death. The Emperor, the Divine Marcus Commodus, has passed away in his sleep. An attack of apoplexy. The gods have called him to his fathers.

XII

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Postumius. Ah! There is Satyrus. How is your master, our beloved Tongilius, this morning?

Satyrus. Alas! he is very low. He grows weaker with every day that passes. Cratippus is with him now, and he begins to fear the worst. Indeed, there seems little hope of his surviving this month. Ah! woe is me, to lose so good a master.

Postumius. Can he not take his food? Did he eat that fine lobster and those fat thrushes I sent him yesterday? My cook was at special pains to prepare the thrushes, each wrapped in vine leaves from my own vineyard. And that reminds me, has he drunk that Caecuban with the yellow seal? It is my best wine, fifteen years in the cellar.

Satyrus. All gone, all. He liked it well.

Postumius. All gone! Why, man, there was a whole amphora. He could not drink it in a few days.

Satyrus. He liked it well. And fever gives thirst. Indeed, I heard him say he hoped that his dear Postumius would remember to send him more.

Postumius. I have not very much of it left. Well, I must see what I can do. So he calls me his dear Postumius, does he ?

Satyrus. Indeed, he speaks with greater affection than that. Your name is always on his lips, and with such endearing terms. I could hardly repeat them without wanting in respect.

Postumius. Well ! Well ! Listen, my good Satyrus, do you happen to know, no, I don't suppose you would, but there was some talk between us the other day of a document, a document upon which he said my name was inscribed. Has he spoken about it again ?

Satyrus. A document ? A poor slave like myself would not know about that, would he ? You must ask Cratippus. Shall I ask him ?

Postumius. No ! no ! It is nothing of importance. Say nothing of it to Cratippus. . . Do many friends come to see him ?

Satyrus. A few, a few. None so welcome as yourself, none. I'll vouch for that.

Postumius. He has no family, no children or grandchildren to enquire how he fares. How sad that is, how very sad !

Satyrus. Very sad, oh ! very sad.

Postumius. But he has none ?

Satyrus. Oh no, Oh no.

Postumius. Alas ! I grieve for him. And you say he is very low to-day, weaker than yesterday. I offered to send him my own doctor. Indeed, I begged of him to let me send him. But he would not consent. And yet he might have helped him. What think you of Cratippus ? What knowledge has he ?

Satyrus. Cratippus has great knowledge. And our master is accustomed to his services, and will not wish to have an unknown face before him.

Postumius. Not even the court doctor? I can bring the Emperor's own physician to see him if he wishes. It is only the great love I bear your master that makes me thus importunate. You will tell him how anxious I am about his health, and that I desire to prolong his life.

Satyrus. Oh! surely, surely. So I have often told him. I would bring you news of him this evening, but alas! I cannot leave the house in those old shoes and this shabby mantle. I would not put my master to such shame; and yet I am loth to trouble him in his illness for the money to buy myself new clothes. Even though his immense wealth would more than suffice to refit a thousand slaves every day. He loves not spending.

Postumius. He is immensely rich, so I have heard.

Satyrus. Beyond all counting.

Postumius. And I have had the folly of leaving him all my fortune in my will! What shall such a trifle mean added to his wealth? Well, I could not do otherwise, for there was no one I loved so well. You might tell him that. It may please him. And Satyrus, do not trouble my dear friend about your wants. Come to my house this evening, and you shall find new shoes, and a mantle worthy of your master's service.

Satyrus. I will indeed come, illustrious

Postumius, and I thank you for your generosity. My master loves an open-handed friend. Here is Cratippus to give us his news.

Cratippus. Hail, Postumius ! and welcome. I would I had better news of our dear friend. But what can one hope at his age ? We endeavour to keep up his strength, and by tempting him with the choicest food we succeed in persuading him to eat. To-day he has a fancy for some oysters, and I have just remembered that the good Caia Rabonia spoke of them lately, and of her wish to send him some.

Postumius. No, pray do not trouble Caia. I have an excellent fishmonger, I will have them sent at once. It is my greatest pleasure to be able to tempt his appetite. Am I not to have the joy of seeing Tongilius ?

Cratippus. There is no one he would see more gladly. When he heard that you were here, nothing would content him but that he must come and see you. His servants are even now helping him to rise. Did I tell you of our misfortune ? His cook has fallen ill, and I do not know how to replace him. If, when you send the oysters, you could also send some trifles for his dinner, it would be a great favour. Very little, of course, for he eats so little. But he loves to pick and choose. Just a couple of fat fowls, a dozen slices of roast boar, some beccaficos, and a few sweet dishes. That will be ample.

Postumius. Oh ! Do you think it is good for him to eat roast boar, and beccaficos ?

Cratippus. Yes, he likes to pick and choose. But pray do not trouble if it is at all inconvenient.

It is only that he generally shows a preference for your food. But I can as easily ask Caia Rabonia to send it. She is for ever offering her services.

Postumius. No, no, I beg you. It is no inconvenience, none, I am delighted to send. Ah! here he comes, my dear friend, my dearest Tongilius. What joy to see you! And walking so bravely. Allow me. Let me help you to your chair. That is well. Are your cushions well placed? Let me put this one beneath your feet. Why, you look quite young again and vigorous! My prayers to Aesculapius must have been heard. Have you slept well?

Tongilius. Ill, very ill! This plaguy cough. Can't get rid of it. You won't have my company for long. Cratippus will tell you how I am. Very weak. Well! Man cannot live for ever.

Postumius. I would that such a man as you could live for ever. But at least you must survive your faithful friend Postumius, on that I insist. I could not live without you. Indeed, I have made all my preparations counting on your survival. I was just telling Satyrus, that I depended on you to dispose of my property after my death. All is left to you, all.

Tongilius. No, Postumius, you must not do that. I will not have my name in your will. In the first place, dear friend, if by some unlucky chance you were to die before me, you must not add to the terrible burden already on my shoulders. What a burden it is, such wealth as mine! How right are the philosophers who maintain that riches do not bring happiness. Certainly not

to a man of my age, and with my infirmities. For those who are still young and strong like yourself, of course, it is a different matter. Otherwise, indeed, I should have scruples in bequeathing my troubles to a friend. But you are sufficiently robust and energetic to carry many burdens. Alas! What am I saying? Well! no matter.

Postumius. Beloved Tongilius, do not, I pray you . . .

Tongilius. And then there is another reason why I should be loth to have my name in your will. There is no man whom I despise more than he who awaits the property of the dead. I would not wish that I myself, however undeservedly, could be accused of courting you for that reason. You know of what calumnies some of our friends are capable. Even the difference in our ages might not save me from that base accusation. No, you must not indeed place my name in your will. Ours is such a disinterested friendship.

Postumius. It is indeed, and that is why it is so dear to me. Nevertheless, I long to do something to mark my affection. I beg you, dear Tongilius, to accept this token of love.

Tongilius. It is hard to resist such affectionate pleading, I see that I must yield. But not in your will, dear Postumius, I cannot have my name in your will. No, if you must give me some pledge of your affection, let it be in your lifetime, when you are there to receive my thanks. Give me some small trifle of money. Just a little sum upon which I can subsist for a few days, and during that time I can say to myself,

I am living at the expense of my friend and benefactor, Postumius. A mere nothing, say a hundred thousand sesterces or so. What is it, Postumius, are you ill? You have grown so pale, shall I call my servants?

Postumius. No, it is nothing, nothing. This sudden breathlessness, it catches me sometimes. It passes quickly. But for a moment I find it difficult to breathe. Let me think. Yes! how I wish that I could always place my hand on a little sum of ready money like that. Just at this moment I fear . . .

Tongilius. Not another word, not a word, dear Postumius, do not think of it again. It was thoughtless of me to suggest such a thing. But you put the idea into my head, and seemed so anxious to put me under some obligation. Well, Well! There is my cough beginning again. I wish I were not so weak. What is it, Cratippus?

Cratippus. So many friends are in the atrium asking to see Tongilius, that I ventured to come back and disturb you.

Tongilius. I must go to them. I am a dying man, but I would wish to die courteously. And there are, doubtless, more than one good friend among them. So, dear Postumius, if you will excuse me.

Postumius. One minute, Tongilius. That little matter of which we spoke just now, of course, it only requires a little arrangement. Send Cratippus to me in the course of the day, and the trifling sum shall be put in his hands at once. Nay, let him come with me now.

Tongilius. Have it so if you will, I cannot

bear to refuse you, dear friend. Cratippus shall follow you immediately. Just now I require his care. But he shall follow you, I promise you. And come back yourself soon to gladden my eyes, the eyes of a poor dying man. I feel I am not here for long now. Farewell! Satyrus shall accompany you, would that I could be in his place . . . Well, Cratippus, how does our business stand?

Cratippus. I think our health will benefit by a change of air. Rome is an excellent place, but not wholesome for those who tarry there for long. Why am I to follow Postumius?

Tongilius. He is anxious to give me a pledge of his affections. Just a little sum of money, one hundred thousand sesterces.

Cratippus. Good. I hope he will have it, so that I can carry it back. Meanwhile, there is Bibulus waiting to pay you a visit, and old Mummius. There is a lady, too. I have forgotten her name, but she came the other day, and brought remedies for your cough.

Tongilius. Fausta, the wife of Asinius, I am not likely to forget her or her remedies. Has she got any with her this time? If she has, you can tell her that I am already dead.

Cratippus. No, I promise you she shall not dose you again.

Tongilius. Well, let Satyrus bring them all to me here, but do you be off and back again as quickly as possible.

Cratippus. I go, Here comes Satyrus with the company.

Tongilius. My kind Fausta, how good of you to visit an ailing old man, and my good Bibulus

and Mummius. Pray be seated, how pleasant it is to have such friends. I should be lost indeed without your kindly care, and the news you bring me from the city.

Bibulus. Was not that Postumius whom I saw leaving you just now?

Tongilius. It was our friend Postumius, he is ever the first to greet me in the morning, and to-day he was anxious to render me some small service.

Mummius. It must be a very small service if Postumius performs it. For my part I should be afraid of accepting it. Postumius generally makes one pay his small services dear.

Fausta. Indeed, Postumius likes to get his money's worth. Did you ever hear how he got that wonderful slave of his, who paints all our portraits? You know he must be worth thousands and thousands of sesterces every month to Postumius at the price he makes us pay for them. Well, he bought him in a job lot at an auction in the Suburra. The lot was made up of a broken table, two cushions that had lost all their feathers, the slave, and an old stool upon which the slave was sitting, for he was too weak and sickly to stand. Postumius paid thirteen denarii for the lot, and quarrelled with the auctioneer, who would not at first include the stool. The auctioneer said the slave must have something to sit on, and Postumius might as well say he had bought the platform too. However, he had to give in, and Postumius carried off the stool. Long afterwards, when he had discovered what a gold mine he had got in the slave, he also discovered that

the stool was broken, and he went back to the auctioneer to get him to refund two denarii. Oh! he does not throw money away, Postumius.

Tongilius. No? does he not? You surprise me. I have found him very open handed.

Bibulus. I dare say you would.

Fausta. My dear Tongilius, I am sure you would.

Mummius. Yes, yes, give a worm to catch a bird, you know. No, that's not it, give a bird to catch a worm. No, what is it, give a bird? give a worm? give a? well, you know what I mean. Not that I am calling you a worm, Tongilius. Oh, no! far from that.

Fausta. I should think not indeed, the idea! Tongilius the most popular man in Rome. How is your cough?

Tongilius. Quite well, thank you, I need no more remedies.

Fausta. There you see! you were cured by the remedies you first refused. I told you so, and now you are quite well.

Tongilius. Alas! that I am not. Old age still cripples my limbs,—old age which cannot be cured,—and shaking ague.

Fausta. Which can be cured quite well. Do you know how to cure ague? I will tell you. What animals are quite free from ague? Frogs, they sit in the water of the marshes where ague lurks, and never suffer from it at all. Because there is in the frog an essence which destroys ague. You take twelve frogs, and boil them slowly in a bowl of milk. Add dried nettles and a little hot pepper. But you must

do this at the beginning of the year under the sign of Aquarius.

Tongilius. Ah! yes, I will certainly try it. Next January, you said. Well, that is only a few months off, not long to wait.

Fausta. Oh, but you must not wait at all. Fortunately I made a quantity of the remedy last year, and I put away a large jar. It smells rather strong, but it is all the better for that. You must warm it first, and drink a full cup, twice a day. I will send for it at once.

Tongilius. No! no! Satyrus, Satyrus, where are you? come here quick. I feel a little faint. Go and fetch me some wine. I am not well, I am not well.

Fausta. Oh! my poor friend! my poor Tongilius! Where do you feel the pain? Where is it, Satyrus?

Tongilius. Don't tell her, Satyrus. Where's that wine. There, pour it out. A good cupful. Ah! I feel better, a little better.

Bibulus. Satyrus shall give me some wine also. I too feel a little faint.

Mummius. Eh! what's that? What are they talking about? A little wine. Yes, I'll have some wine. It is early in the day, but I'll have some wine.

Fausta. You would do better if you tried my remedy.

Tongilius. Honoured Fausta, I would gladly do so but I fear to offend Cratippus, who will not let me take any remedies but his own. Here is Mummius who, I am sure, will be grateful for it.

Mummius. What's that? No, I'll not take any more wine, no more wine, thank you.

Fausta. He gets more deaf every day. We were talking of a remedy for ague.

Mummius. A remedy? Give it to Bibulus. Do him good.

Fausta. I shall not waste it on either of you. Dear Tongilius, it is my greatest joy to serve you. I would that I could be with you all the day, and minister to your wants. But, alas, I have other duties, and already I must leave you. Send for me, dear friend, whenever you want me, no matter what hour. Do you hear, Satyrus? Come at once to my house, if your dear master needs anything. I hope the woollen cloth was to his liking. There should have been enough for twenty tunics. Farewell, beloved Tongilius.

Tongilius. A very kind lady.

Bibulus. A very dangerous one to live with. I wonder her husband is yet alive. I would as soon have married Locusta herself. Even the aged Mummius, who, I observe, is now asleep, would have hardly survived her ministrations. Now we are alone, since Mummius does not hear, we might settle a little matter of business. Cratippus gave me your note of hand, dear friend, for the little loan which you honoured me by borrowing. Here it is, a promise to repay me two hundred thousand sesterces. See what I do with it. I destroy the tablets and their records. What need is there of any written promise between friends such as we are? What do I care if your heirs repay me

or not? I have the joy of obliging my dear Tongilius.

Tongilius. My noble Bibulus; my sad and solitary old age is neither sad nor solitary when it is cheered by such a friendship as yours. Your trust, your affectionate trust, touches me more than I can say. Indeed, I am glad to think it will not be in the power of my heir to disappoint you, since your interests must certainly be his own. But what am I saying? I did not mean to disclose this matter to you. Well! I cannot keep it secret for much longer, for death creeps ever nearer, and with a hastening foot. I have very little time left me now, but one great consolation. That wealth, which has sweetened my passage through the world, will after my death fall into very noble hands; very good hands, my noble Bibulus.

Bibulus. Ah! my friend, let me embrace you. Here is Mummius waking up.

Mummius. Waking up! I have not been asleep. I have heard all you were saying. Charming woman Fausta, charming. Great admiration for Fausta. But I'm glad I am not her husband. Too greedy, you know. Too avaricious. Always looking for money. Flatters an old fellow like myself, just for money. I always say, don't trust anybody younger than yourself. I am an old man. There is not much I can do for anybody now, and not much time to do it in. But there it is. I have a nice little property, and I do not wish it to go to an unworthy heir. And that is why I came to-day to my dear friend Tongilius. I have written here a little note of the epitaph which

I would wish to have graven on my tombstone.

TO THE MANES
OF
BALBUS MUMMIUS CALVUS
A ROMAN KNIGHT
WHO FALSELY ACCUSED OF WRONGFUL ASSUMPTION
OF THIS RANK
WAS TRIUMPHANTLY
ACQUITTED
HIS MEMORY IS EVER HELD IN RESPECT
BY HIS ORDER
THIS STONE WAS ERECTED BY HIS HEIR
MARCUS TONGILIUS
TO WHOM HE BEQUEATHED ALL HIS PROPERTY
AND HIS GOLD RING

There, Tongilius, what do you think of that? Shall I read it to you again?

Tongilius. No, dear Mummius, that is not necessary. But why leave your money to a dead man, for I have indeed little time to live?

Bibulus. Farewell! beloved Tongilius. A word in your ear. Don't lend money to Mummius. Farewell! Mummius, capital epitaph, capital; we shall all be pleased to see that tombstone put up.

Mummius. What did he mean by that? May the gods avert the omen! I do not trust Bibulus. And I should advise you, Tongilius, to put little faith in him, and his promises.

Tongilius. Bibulus has made me no promises, and he is a good friend, too. This house, in which we are now, has been lent me by Bibulus.

Mummius. A poor shelter truly for a man like yourself. Well, it matters little, for in a short time you will have one of the most beautiful houses in Rome. I am soon about to leave it, very soon. I feel that it cannot be long now. Forgive this weakness, I must wipe away my tears. What does the poet say, we must abandon all, country, house, and dear wife, only the melancholy cypress to bear one company. Well, I have no dear wife, and that is a comfort. Ah! I remember now, there was a little matter I wished to consult you about. At the back of the house there is a pleasant garden belonging to a neighbour, who wishes to sell it. It would greatly improve the house itself if that garden was added to it. He asks a mere trifle, twenty thousand sesterces or so. I thought you would probably like to buy it for yourself, as the house will soon be yours.

Tongilius. With whose money, Mummius?

Mummius. With yours, of course; when I die the house has no more interest for me. You have only to give me the money now and the business is done. No trouble to yourself at all.

Tongilius. I do not want the garden.

Mummius. But I assure you it is almost necessary to the house.

Tongilius. I do not want the house.

Mummius. But Tongilius! Why! you will say next that you do not want my friendship.

Tongilius. I do not want your friendship.

Mummius. Oh! That's a pity, because I really do want a few sesterces.

Tongilius. You shall have them. But you will have to earn them. Wait, here is Cratippus.

Go into that inner room until I call you. Well, Cratippus ?

Cratippus. All is well in that I have got the money. Added to that of Bibulus and the others, it is quite a good sum. But all is not well otherwise. Bibulus has been making enquiries about us in a quarter where they know too much. Alas ! why were you sometimes so young ? Why did you insist on being your own son ? Bibulus has learnt a good deal, and I know is now on his way to Postumius. They will put their heads together, and then ? we had best be off. I spoke to Satyrus on my way in and he has already got our spoils together, and the slaves to carry them.

Tongilius. You are right. Tell Satyrus to bring a basin of water. And I will be my own son in earnest. Give me a thousand sesterces. I want them for Mummius, he shall delay the pursuit. Quick, Satyrus . . .

Is it all gone. Now I am again my father's son. Send Mummius to me.

Mummius. Ye gods ! what is this portent ! Has Tongilius passed through the caldron of Medea and become a youth again ?

Tongilius. You have told the truth. Look ! Mummius, here are a thousand sesterces. They are yours if you will do exactly what I bid you. I give them to you now. But beware ! If you don't do what I tell you, I will get those sesterces back again even if I have to send the Furies to fetch them. You are to wait here in the atrium. Whoever comes, you will relate the same tale. Tongilius is dead ! alas ! old Tongilius is dead. His son arrived just in

time to receive his last breath. Did not they know that he had a son? Well, he had, and his son is even now scouring Rome in search of his father's dear friends. He may return any minute. But Tongilius! poor Tongilius is dead! Do you understand?

Mummius. I understand, you want me to tell the truth, as far as I know it.

Tongilius. Are the slaves at their entrance? Quick, Cratippus, Satyrus, let us be off. I hear voices at the door.

Mummius. Well, I have got a thousand sesterces. And now I can enjoy myself with Bibulus and that miser Postumius.

XIII

THE PROBLEM OF BURIDAN

Catullus. Stay, Quintia. So many days I have not seen you, so many weeks even. You can surely spare a few minutes now to a humble adorer, an old friend.

Quintia. To the old friend, yes! for adorers I have no time. And as to humble adorers, I know what humility means with Catullus.

Catullus. What does it mean?

Quintia. A disguise, dear Catullus, and a very short-lived disguise. One word of compassion, and quick the humble slave becomes an arrogant master. Well, it is true that we have not met for a long time, and I would gladly hear your news. Let us sit here?

Catullus. We have not met, because you avoided me. Why have you avoided me? What have I done to offend you.

Quintia. We have not met, probably, because chance would have it so. But how was it that you did not seek me out? Chance did not prevent your looking for me.

Catullus. How do you know I have not looked for you?

Quintia. Because, had you done so, you would have found me very easily.

Catullus. Oh ! Quintia !

Quintia. Oh ! Caius Valerius !

Catullus. Alas ! dear Quintia.

Quintia. Alas and alas ! dear Caius Valerius! and also woe is me !

Catullus. Don't laugh at me.

Quintia. Then do not look so sadly solemn. Tragedy is not for you, Catullus.

Catullus. But I am really unhappy, miserable.

Quintia. My poor friend, whose is the last hard heart ?

Catullus. There can be no heart as hard as yours. You no longer care what happens to me, whether I live or die, am well or sick, it is all one to you. No, no, I know that is not true. Forgive me. Don't turn away, dear Quintia. I did not wish to wound you. Give me your hands. There ! those dear white hands ; how often has my heart lain between those soft palms.

Quintia. They could not hold it, Catullus, though indeed they tried.

Catullus. I am not reproaching them, dear, I only blame myself. Don't take them away. Let me kiss them again. Though truly I do not deserve even to kiss your feet.

Quintia. Still wearing the cloak of humility ?

Catullus. Ah ! but there is no pretence about it. I always think of you as something far above me. I am always at your feet. Do you remember those verses I wrote in your garden, that began :

> Like a tall cypress Quintia stands ;
> My kisses hardly reach her hands,
> And never touch her lips.

Quintia. Alas! the lips were not long beyond your reach.

Catullus. You do not regret it, Quintia.

Quintia. No, dear, I don't regret. You made me very happy once. But tell me . . .

Catullus. Tell you what?

Quintia. Am I so very tall? Am I awkwardly tall? Too tall for a woman?

Catullus. You move like a goddess. But why do you ask? Why are you laughing?

Quintia. I was thinking of some verses I read the other day. They were written in a lady's tablets. Somebody, a kind friend of course, brought me a copy. Shall I repeat them to you? They are quite new, listen:

> Let the world sing Quintia's charms—
> Her slender body, straight and tall,
> Whiter than snow her neck and arms;
> I hardly care for them at all.
> I'd rather sing the dainty grace,
> The laughing mouth, the sidelong glance,
> The tender curves of Lesbia's face,
> The rosy lips, the eyes that dance. . . .

Shall I go on? or will Catullus finish his verses for himself? What, at a loss for an answer? But do tell me, where were those rosy lips, when you composed those lines? Very near your own, I suspect. What are you saying about being betrayed? Nonsense! You were not so silly as to believe that your Lesbia would keep those verses to herself. Of course, she showed them to everybody. No, I am not angry. Why should I be? I think the verses are very flattering for me, much too flattering. All the same I had rather they had been written

to please anybody but Clodia, or Lesbia as you call her.

Catullus. What is Clodia to me?

Quintia. I would not like to say.

Catullus. Ah, Quintia! you loved me once.

Quintia. I don't deny it. The gods heard our vows. Ah! more than once we made them.

Catullus. Do you never think of those days? Of the days we counted all too short for our love? Or of the nights, of our nights that were never long enough?

Quintia. I have not forgotten them, and well you know it.

Catullus. That was a happy time for me. I have never been so happy since. And you?

Quintia. For me, too, it was a happy time. But more often I remember the earliest days of all, in our old country home. When I was little more than a child, and Caius, that studious youth, found in me a playmate to his mind. A girl scarce half his age, and so proud of his friendship. And you were very good to me. We were good friends then, were we not? Even then I was tall for my years, and you used to compare me with poplar trees, and tease me about my long legs. Do you remember? and do you remember the day I hurt my foot, and you carried me home, a long, long way, in your arms? You could not carry me now.

Catullus. I would carry you twice as far to receive the same reward.

Quintia. What was that?

Catullus. Two arms tight round my neck, and a long, long kiss. It was not our first, but I think it was the best.

Quintia. It was not our first, but it might well have been the last.

Catullus. What do you mean?

Quintia. Never mind. You would not understand.

Catullus. Well, I am glad it was not the last. I wonder how many . . .

Quintia. How many kisses, were you going to say? You seem to be fond of that question.

Catullus. What do you mean?

Quintia. Shall I repeat some more verses from the same poet:

> Why does Lesbia bid me say
> How many times to slack its rage
> My thirsty mouth, within the day,
> Seeks hers and yet finds no assuage.
> The kisses that I fain would take
> Outnumber far the grains of sand. . . .

Do you want me to go on? or do you prefer the third verse:

> I'd rather count the stars in heaven
> That through the peaceful summer night.

I forget the rest. Were Lesbia's kisses so very satisfying, Catullus? or were they so very unsatisfying that you never had enough of them?

Catullus. May all the infernal gods keep Lesbia and her kisses! Why do you talk of Lesbia? Do let us forget her for once.

Quintia. I would like to forget her, if you could.

Catullus. Why should I not? I don't belong to Lesbia, do I? I am not her slave that I must follow her where she will. And what

do you care for her? She is nothing to you? You were never friends.

Quintia. It is true we never were friends. She is nothing to me. But I hate her. I hate her. I hate her. Oh, why did you, why did you?

Catullus. Quintia, dear Quintia, darling, my little love, my little love, don't cry. What is it, dear? Oh, my little Quintia, don't sob like that.

Quintia. There's nobody,—nobody to hear me.

Catullus. As if that mattered, it is my heart that you are tearing. There, dear, that's better. Let me wipe away those tears. Oh, what great drops! Let me kiss those dear wet eyes. And that sweet foolish mouth.

Quintia. Let me go. Caius. It is all over now. I was silly, never mind. There, you see, I am quite myself again.

Catullus. Quintia, you know I love you.

Quintia. Do I? I know you loved me once. Perhaps you sometimes love me now. I like to think so. But . . .

Catullus. But what?

Quintia. I won't share you with Lesbia. I can't.

Catullus. There is no question of sharing. Quintia, do believe me when I say that Lesbia is nothing to me.

Quintia. I don't mind anybody else, but I won't share you with Lesbia.

Catullus. But what can I say to make you believe me? What can I do?

Quintia. You can say nothing, but you might do something. Listen, Caius, to-morrow

I am going to leave Rome for the North. I am going to the old house near Verona. Will you promise that when I am gone . . .

Catullus. But why should I not go to ? why should I not go to my own villa at Verona ? And then we shall be country neighbours once again. Think, we will visit our old haunts ; we will wander once more through our woods, hand in hand once more, Quintia. That is settled ; to-morrow the litter of Catullus will join that of Quintia at the Colline Gate, and then away with us on the Northern Road, and let Rome go hang.

Quintia. Will you really come ?

Catullus. Truly I will. By Jupiter ! I will. By all the gods I swear it ! by your own sweet self !

Quintia. Oh, I shall be so happy. But look, Caius, isn't that ? It is, it is Lesbia, and she is coming here.

Catullus. In an evil hour ! in an evil hour ! May all the . . .

Quintia. Hush, she will hear you.

Lesbia. Hail, Catullus ! and good fortune.

Catullus. Good fortune with you, Clodia !

Lesbia. Why, there is Quintia, I did not see you before. Hail, Quintia, good health and happiness.

Quintia. Hail, Clodia !

Lesbia. You both look very serious. Has Quintia been helping Catullus to write an elegy ?

Quintia. Catullus goes elsewhere for inspiration for his verses.

Lesbia. I hope he does,—for some of them at least. Quite shocking, are they not ?

Quintia. I have not read them.

Lesbia. But perhaps he has read them to you. He is a very naughty fellow.

Quintia. Catullus has read me nothing that I could blame.

Lesbia. No, really! I am afraid Catullus is not the only naughty one then.

Quintia. I don't know what you mean, Clodia.

Lesbia. Don't you? It doesn't matter. Rome is dreadfully hot, isn't it? I only returned from Baiae yesterday. I think I shall go back there to-morrow. We never see you at Baiae, Quintia?

Quintia. I never go there.

Lesbia. Oh! is that the reason? how odd. Catullus goes there. Don't you, Catullus?

Catullus. I detest Baiae.

Lesbia. That I suppose was why you ran away last week in such a hurry. There was Catullus, the centre of all the beautiful women; and next moment he was gone, vanished, and all the lovely women left abandoned and disconsolate.

Quintia. And one abandoned woman followed him here.

Lesbia. I beg your pardon, Quintia, did you say anything?

Catullus. Yes! it is very hot here. Very hot indeed. I am very hot, too.

Lesbia. You look it! You should have stayed in Baiae, and then you would have been much cooler. Better come back with me to-morrow! What do you say? He does look hot, doesn't he, Quintia? The perspiration

running off his face. Don't you wish you could wear a dress like Quintia's ? So nice and cool, almost nothing on, you know, and what there is, so light and transparent. Charming, charming !

Catullus. I think there must be thunder in the air. It feels like a thunderstorm.

Lesbia. Do you think so ? How is your husband, Quintia ?

Quintia. My husband is dead.

Lesbia. Of course. How stupid of me to forget. How fortunate for you ! I mean, how fortunate for him ! No, I did not mean that either. It is so confusing nowadays with all one's friends marrying and divorcing, and dying, and remarrying, and beginning all over again, you know. Of course, I remember your husband's death. He was such an old dear. He used to tell me all about the Punic wars, and how he fought in them when he was young.

Quintia. He could not have told you that. The Punic wars were more than a hundred years ago.

Lesbia. Well, he was hundreds of years old, wasn't he ?

Quintia. How is Metellus Celer ?

Lesbia. How is my husband ? how good of you to ask ! He is not dead yet, you know. Poor man, he is waiting to divorce me first. He will have to make haste. The last I heard of him was in company of that dreadful old bore Cicero.

Quintia. I thought Cicero was an admirer of yours.

Lesbia. Well, I am not an admirer of his. Come, Quintia! Your family is older than even my musty list of ancestors. Why should we have to be friends with these new men who push themselves in everywhere? And there's Catullus making up to him, too. What was it you called him? "Most eloquent of the sons of Romulus." Old windbag! If you were a little more civil to Caesar, and a little less to that old busybody, it would be better for your fortunes, Catullus. . . . How silent we are. . . .

Quintia. I am going, farewell, Clodia!

Lesbia. Farewell, Quintia! You have not quite forgotten where I live?

Quintia. Why?

Lesbia. You might come to see me sometimes, when your friends can spare you.

Quintia. Farewell, Catullus.

Catullus. But I am accompanying you back to your litter?

Quintia. No, no, it is not necessary, . . . till to-morrow only!

Lesbia. Catullus will wait with me here a little. Take care of that arch. There, she is gone. What did she say to you then?

Catullus. When?

Lesbia. When she said it was not necessary to accompany her.

Catullus. Nothing! what did you think she said?

Lesbia. I thought I heard her say to-morrow!

Catullus. It was you who said you were going away to-morrow. Perhaps she said something about that.

Lesbia. Why should she? Unless she said you are not to go away to-morrow.

Catullus. No! I don't think that she said that. She wouldn't say that, you know.

Lesbia. Oh! wouldn't she? Well, then, you are coming to-morrow. You are coming with me to Baiae.

Catullus. So you have said once already.

Lesbia. And I mean it. You leave me in a fit of ill-temper, I hurry after you to Rome, and find you at the feet of that ship's mast. I believe you had been trying to climb it, you looked guilty enough. There was something up, I know, for her eyes were red. What had happened between you?

Catullus. Nothing. We met here by pure chance. Quintia is an old friend. Her family and mine . . .

Lesbia. Never mind about her family She is not old either, so you need not pretend she is.

Catullus. I am not pretending anything of the kind.

Lesbia. Well, don't. What were you two talking about?

Catullus. Oh, everything, anything. How should I remember? Look, Clodia, I am not going to be attacked by somebody who should be on her own defence. You want to know why I left Baiae? well . . .

Lesbia. I don't. But I'd like you to know why and how I left Baiae! I sent a servant to find you. Catullus was gone,—gone to Rome without a word. Gone four days before. What did I do? I called my servant. . . .

Catullus. May I ask why you did not find out that I was gone until four days afterwards? What were you doing during those four days, Clodia?

Lesbia. I won't tell you anything, if you call me Clodia; you know how I hate your calling me by that name.

Catullus. Well, Lesbia then, what were you doing during those four days? I know very well where you were supping the day I left Baiae, and I would like to know . . .

Lesbia. Don't say Lesbia like that. It sounds almost as bad as Clodia when you say it like that. It used to sound so different once. My little Lesbia! Lesbia darling! you thought differently of Lesbia then. Poor Lesbia, you don't know what a journey she had. Oh! Caius, you would have been sorry for me, if you had seen me hurrying, hurrying, and we couldn't get a change of horses at the last station, and we had to wait for hours. And I was so sick and so tired. And we travelled all night, I wouldn't even stop to sleep. And what was I travelling for? just to see you. Just to see and tell you that I loved you, and when I got here what was my welcome? Where did I find you? Oh, Caius, I find you here with Quintia. That is all you cared for me. Oh, I was a fool to follow you. I was a fool to let myself love you. And now I am sick and ill, and you don't care a bit. Your heart is harder than the stones of the Appian Road. Oh, how tired I am, and how I hate the Appian Road, and now I suppose I have got to go back over it all alone to-morrow. Your heart, did I say? you never had a heart.

Catullus. That is all very well, but it does not explain what you were doing those four days.

Lesbia. I was ill. Ill and waiting for my Caius to come to me, and he never came. I am ill now.

Catullus. You don't look it, you never looked better.

Lesbia. Oh! darling Caius, do you think so? Do you think I look prettier, I think the sea does agree with me. Caius, sweet one, you will come back with me to-morrow, won't you? We will have such a happy time, if only you will come, and will forget all about our silly quarrel? What is the use of quarrelling always? To-morrow, Caius, we'll follow the Appian Road, and southwards to the soft south wind, and the warm south waves—to-morrow, Caius, to-morrow?

Catullus. To-morrow? . . .

XIV

ON THE PALACE BRIDGE

ON THE PALACE BRIDGE

Gallus (a Palace official). It is no use appealing to me. The Divine Caius has given this order and the statue must go. Go home and make another statue of Hermes if the loss of this one makes you so unhappy.

Geryon (a sculptor). How shall I ever make another? Do you think I can repeat a work like that? Never shall I have such another model. Oh! it is a cruel fate to serve a master like Caligula!

Gallus. The Divine Caius does what he likes with his own, and I should advise you to let no one hear you call him Caligula. He does not like the name.

Geryon. What do I care?

Gallus. Come! come! my friend. I am only warning you for your good. Take care that the Caesar's anger against the model of your statue does not extend to its maker.

Geryon. But why was he angry? You know I have been told nothing of this at all. A slave came from the Palace early this morning, and said the statue of Hermes was to be destroyed at once. I hurried here and find these men already at work. What has happened? You must know, Gallus.

Gallus. I'll tell you, if you will wait a minute. Here, you men ! can't you free the pedestal without spoiling the balustrade ? That's the way ; work round it till you get it loose, and, when you have got it loose, tell me.

Geryon. Ah, then you are going to lower it gently on to the bridge ? You are not going to break it up ?

Gallus. We are going to push it over.

Geryon. No ! No ! you are mad ! You cannot mean that !

Gallus. My good Geryon, it is no use wailing. That statue has got to be destroyed.

Geryon. But it will fall more than fifty paces. It will be smashed to pieces. Do you know where it will fall ?

Gallus. Well, as a matter of fact I don't. You cannot see from above because of those projecting bushes. The Caesar would have myrtles planted there, and see how they have grown. There may be an open court below, or there may be a roof. I don't know. I am sorry for the house, if it is a roof. Probably the Palace kitchens. Well, a cook or two the less won't matter.

Geryon. But why, why are you doing this ?

Gallus. Oh ! you still want your story.

Geryon. Why did not Hermes prevent it ?

Gallus. Which Hermes do you mean ? the god or the actor ? you see, that is the story. It was an unlucky day for Hermes the actor when he posed to you as a model for his namesake the god. Still more unlucky, when you persuaded the Caesar to place the statue here.

Geryon. I wanted it to be where all the world would see it. Ye gods, how beautiful it is! How beautiful! Never shall I do such work as that again.

Gallus. Well, fill your eyes with it while you can. It won't be there much longer.

Geryon. Alas! alas! what a shame. What a shame, that such beauty should be destroyed. But you have not yet told me why Caesar gave this order.

Gallus. I must make the story short, for Caesar will be here soon to see that his order has been carried out. Hermes has been falling out of favour for some time past. And they say, with good cause. Some people whisper treason; I know nothing of that. Wait, . . . come farther away. I don't want those men to hear me. There are spies everywhere in the Palace. All I know is that Hermes was all powerful but a month ago, and now. . . . Well, I should not be surprised to see him without a head to-morrow. You must have heard, when he was posing to you, how he used to play the fool about his name. Pretending that he was the god himself, and that he had come from Olympus to bring greetings from Jupiter to our latest deity, the Divine Caius. It is difficult to know with Caligula what he believes, and what he does not. He so often plays the fool himself. He sits in the temple of Jupiter for hours sometimes, and says he has been talking with his fellow-god. Well, Hermes used to work on his folly with this folly of his own, just as if two fools together made a wise man, or two lies a truth. He persuaded Caesar to visit the

new soothsayer, Aristaeus, whom Hermes, of course, had bribed. You know Caesar always ends by asking soothsayers when he is going to die, and Aristaeus answered with some gibberish like this: "Twice shall the wand of Hermes beckon to summon Caius to the gods," the invention of your friend the actor, naturally, who wanted Caesar to believe that he could not die as long as Hermes was there. I don't blame him. Men who live so close to Caesar are apt to think a great deal about death, and of the best means of keeping alive. But I fancy Hermes had been presuming too much on his position also. At any rate last night there was a dispute between them at supper. Hermes flatters himself he can say what he pleases to Caesar, and this time he was almost insolent. They were both drunk, but unluckily for him Hermes was the most drunk of the two. They came out of the Palace together, Caesar leaning on Hermes' arm. When they reached this spot, almost where we are standing now, Hermes suddenly stopped, and holding out his hand called out, "See! the god beckons." We all looked at the statue, while Hermes began ranting some kind of invocation. Probably it was the flicker of torchlight; but it did really seem as if the caduceus moved in the statue's hand. In the light one could only see the face of the statue dimly, but I saw Caesar's face plainly enough. I would not like to have him cast the look on me that he cast on Hermes. Hermes saw it too at last, and it sobered him. His voice died away, and he stood as if he had seen the Gorgon's head, and been turned to

stone. Caesar said never a word. He turned, and went back into the Palace, we all following him. Hermes stood staring after us, and then reeled away in the opposite direction, still unsteady on his legs. This morning they brought me the order I have told you. Now you know as much as I do myself. Have you finished there? Isn't that pedestal loose yet? Good, over it goes.

Geryon. Oh! Gallus! stop, one more look, ah alas, my work, my darling work!

Gallus. Where has it fallen? Can you see there? No? it doesn't matter. It must have brushed through the bushes without breaking them. Listen, Geryon, I can promise nothing, but if you wish I will try to collect the pieces for you. What! Why here comes the man himself. It is Hermes and the Greek boy who acts with him. He is a fool to come here. I think we had better be going ourselves; this is not a healthy spot to-day.

Hermes. Oh, ye good gods! It is true then, it is true. It is gone. What is the meaning of this, Gallus? And Geryon here, too? Why don't you answer me? Why are you leaving without a word? Geryon, my old friend! Do you no longer care for Caesar's favour, that you turn from me? Stay, Gallus, you shall speak.

Gallus. Let me go, Hermes. If you want a friend's advice, go yourself, and do not wait the coming of Caesar.

Hermes. So that is what is in your mind. You think because Caesar vents his anger upon my marble effigy he will vent it too on me, on

the living me? I know my Caesar. There is no fear of that. No fear of that. Oh! I am distracted, I know not what to do. What shall I do? Have you seen Caesar? Why won't you answer me, Gallus? It will be the worse for you, when I see him myself. That you should dare to flout me like this. Go then! go, you cowardly slaves. Do you think it is the first time I have known Caesar in this mood? There! they are gone! The curse of Hecate go with them!

The Boy. Oh! Hermes, why did we come? Do let us go quickly. I begged of you not to come here. Hermes! I am frightened. Come away. By the gods! I implore you. By my love, dear Hermes, come away!

Hermes. Hold your tongue, fool. Let me think quietly. What shall I say to him, if he comes? How shall I greet him? If only I could see him alone. Too late! I hear them, they are coming. Quick, look round the corner, and see who is with him.

The Boy. Some of the German guard, I think. Some of the Palace guard too, and Chaerea. The Caesar is walking alone between them. Oh, how that slow tramp of soldiers beats on my heart. And how my heart beats. Hermes! let us go, quick.

Hermes. Too late. The die is cast, the die is cast. Ah! Son of Jupiter and Maia, aid now thy servant's tongue. Hail, Divine Caius! Hail Caesar!

Caligula. What does Hermes here?

Hermes. He humbly waits his master's orders.

Caligula. Orders? Gods do not receive orders; they only give them.

Hermes. That is why I wait on the Divine Caius.

Caligula. Look Chaerea, do you know who this is? You thought he was a Greek actor, perhaps? He is not. He is a god. Sits in Olympus when he is not running messages, for Jupiter, or for myself. He summons the dead, too.

> "Lifts his dread wand, where the twin serpents cling,
> And the pale shades obedient hail him king!"

Where is your statue, Hermes?

Hermes. Jupiter launched his thunderbolt, and it was no more.

Caligula. Very uncivil of Jupiter. Will you go and tell him so?

Hermes. I will go wherever my Caesar sends me.

Caligula. Well, to-day I have no message for the gods above, though I might have one for the gods below. That is an ugly gap. We must fill it with another statue. What shall we put there, Hermes? How can we replace your divinity?

Hermes. I cannot say, Caesar.

Caligula. Nor can I, nor can I. It was a beautiful thing that statue, not easy to replace. A very beautiful thing. Not so beautiful as yourself, Hermes. No one was ever more beautiful than you. I think after all we must put you back again. We will put Hermes on his pedestal again.

Hermes. Oh, Caesar! oh, my kind master! my tongue can never tell my gratitude. The gods grant me a long life to thank you. Oh! let me kiss those dear feet again.

Caligula. There, there. That will do. Go and fetch back your statue then, and go by the quickest way. I myself must go on to the temple of Jupiter. I'll speak to him about that thunderbolt. Farewell! Hermes, you'll take the shortest way?

Hermes. I don't quite understand. What does Caesar mean by the shortest way?

Caligula. The way the statue went. Help him over the balustrade, you men, and quickly.

Hermes. Stop, Caesar is only jesting. Let me go. Caesar, tell them it is only a jest. Let me go. I say, let me speak to Caesar! Chaerea! my friend Chaerea! tell them to let me go. Ah, Caesar! Hear me. Hear me, Caligula, murderer, beast, may the foul Furies haunt you. I spit at you, beast, Caligula! I spit on you! Dog, Hell dog! twice, remember, twice, wait the second call, wait the . . .

Chaerea. What's that? his sandal? throw it after him. Caesar seems in a hurry to be gone. Look at him, the guard can hardly keep up with him. You fool, Mutius, why did you let him bawl my name like that? Couldn't you stop his mouth?

Mutius. I did my best, look at my hand how it bleeds. He nearly bit it through.

Chaerea. Well, it matters little. He hadn't time to say much. Look out there! stop that boy, quick! he is going to jump over. Bring him here. There, boy, nobody is going to

hurt you. You, Mutius, hurry and join the escort at the temple. I will follow presently. Leave the boy here with me. Listen, boy, courage, courage, I am a friend. Tell me, did you love Hermes so well that you would kill yourself for him? What? He was everything to you, do you say? And you cannot live without him? Well, well, but suppose you could better serve him by living than dying. Eh! you could turn that pretty head to a better use than knocking its brains out. Would you not like to revenge your friend's death? What do you say? Yes? that's a brave lad. Do you know who I am?

Boy. You are Chaerea, tribune of the Praetorian Cohort.

Chaerea. Yes. Do you know where I live? ask for the commander of the Emperor's guard. They will show you. Meanwhile wait for me here, Caesar will come back very shortly. When he passes, throw yourself weeping on the ground, with your head well wrapped in your cloak. He will pay no attention probably, and if he does, I will look after you. But be cautious, say nothing, nothing. Do you understand? that's right.

Boy. He is gone, too. What shall I do? Oh, Hermes, Hermes. I cannot bear it, never to see you again, I cannot bear it. Ye gods! What's that? Hermes! Hermes!! Is it really you, and alive? Oh, how did you escape? How glad I am! oh, how glad! But you are dripping wet! What has happened? What god has saved you? Oh! But Caesar returns here any minute. Let's get away at once, do

let's go. You were mad to come back here. Why did you not escape when you could? Are you hurt? Tell me first, are you hurt? and do let us flee at once, it is madness to remain here.

Hermes. I am mad.

Boy. Why do you look so wildly? What is it? Are you hurt?

Hermes. It is nothing. My back, I think, but it is nothing. You said the truth. A god saved me. The statue in falling broke the roof over the great cistern into fragments, and I fell right through them into deep water. That is why I am wet. I climbed from the roofs to the old stairway, and that is how I got here. If I had fallen into Hell, I would still have come back. For I have come to kill him, I have come to kill him. I swear by all the infernal gods he shall not escape me. Mad, do you say? I am mad. I am mad for revenge. I care for nothing afterwards. Let me die a thousand deaths, so I may kill him now. The cowardly monster! Let me suffer every pain of Hell, if I may send him there first.

Boy. Dear Hermes, I implore you, come away. What is that you are holding there?

Hermes. The god gave me a weapon, too. It is the caduceus from the statue. It is solid metal. I'll kill him with it.

Boy. Oh! you are mad, mad. What will happen to us? And they will be back here at any minute, and there is nowhere to hide.

Hermes. Hide? do you think I want to hide? Not from him. He shall see me well enough. He shall see me, and he shall see his death.

Hide? I'll batter his false face to rags with Hermes' rod. Ah! Caesar, I bid you wait its second call. This time it shall send you to Hell. Where shall I stand? Where I can spring on him? The empty pedestal? The very place! why did I not think of that before? Here, take my things, quick, make a bundle of them, and throw them over the bridge if you like.

Boy. But, Hermes, what are you doing? Why are you stripping yourself? Oh, he is really mad! why do you want to go naked? Oh! I see now what you mean. You are going to be the statue. You look,—one might almost believe the statue had returned.

Hermes. Who should take the pose better than I? He told me to fetch it back. He shall find it. Oh! he shall find it when he comes. He is coming! he is coming! . . .

Chaerea. What is the matter there! What are those men doing? What do you say? the god bars the way? What god? Look to the Caesar. He is ill. Lift him up, you men. He has fallen in a fit? Carry him off quickly. He has these fits sometimes. What do you say? look at the god! What are you all pointing at? there is nothing there. The god? The statue? There's no statue there. You are crazy, men! Quick then, carry Caesar back to the temple. So, are you all mad? One would think that Caesar and all of you had seen Pan. My good Mutius; at least you did not run away like the rest. Why, man, you are shaking like a leaf. What are you staring at?

Mutius. The god! Hermes! don't you see him?

Chaerea. Are they all gone? They are in a hurry. Look at them dragging Caesar along as if he was a dead calf. No, my brave Mutius, I cannot see any god; but I can see a very good actor. Go now; mount guard yourself at this corner, and let no one pass back this way. No one, do you understand? Even if it were your own centurion, cut him down. Chaerea's orders! and be quick, unless you want to wait and apologise to Hermes, and ask him where he learnt to bite. Now, my friend Hermes, you can descend from your pedestal. Surely you did not hope to frighten Chaerea, did you? He has seen too many ghosts to run away from one.

Hermes. Oh, Chaerea! What kind of a friend are you? To stand by and let me be handled like that, and thrown like a dog to death. A friend who would not even answer my dying call.

Chaerea. Nonsense! What do you suppose I could do? Mutius would have obeyed me, and perhaps two or three others. What could three men do against thirty of those German brutes? What good would it have done you, or anybody else, if we all went over the bridge together? I couldn't save you possibly then. But I can save you now, and we must be quick about it. You must tell me how you managed to fall so soft, another time. Get back into your clothes, man, you can't walk through the Palace naked. Why are they so wet? Oh, I can guess how you fell so softly. Never mind looking for your other sandal, you won't find it. What's that lying there? Caesar's cloak! Ah, Hermes! how the gods protect you! Throw

it over your shoulders, hide your face in its folds, slouch your head forward as he does. That's it. No one will stop or question you. But throw it away as soon as you are outside the Palace gates. His cloak would be a poor protection in the city. There, but tell me, what did you intend doing when you were standing there ?

Hermes. I was going to kill him with this.

Chaerea. With the caduceus ? that's a good jest. Throw it away now, back from where you took it. But how was it you didn't kill him ?

Hermes. I don't know. I was just going to spring upon him when he saw me and fell to the ground. And then, what was the use ? He would not have known how he died, or who struck the blow.

Chaerea. I see ; well, it was a pity the chance was missed. Away with you now. Send the boy to me when you are in safety, and I may have something to propose. Farewell. . . . Now, let us see how we can make the prophecy of Aristaeus come true since Caesar has been summoned twice.

XV

WHERE CAESAR BLED

Herod Agrippa. Where are we? I cannot see before me. There is no glimmer of light inside these passages. We should have brought a lamp.

Creusa. We cannot go back for one now. Give me your hand, Prince, and let me guide you. Here we are safe; and here it were better we should wait until the light comes. It cannot be long before dawn now.

Herod. I know not where you have brought me. In this darkness are you sure yourself of where we are?

Creusa. I know my way through the Palaces blindfold. We are in a little passage that leads to the long covered gallery. And we are close, close to him. Close to where they say my dear master is lying. Close to my poor boy, so cruelly killed. Oh! my darling, oh woe! . . . oh woe! . . . oh woe! . . .

Herod. Hush, woman! hush! They will hear if you wail so loud. Hush!

Creusa. My boy! my boy! who is there to lament him, if not I?

Herod. Wait till we have found him, and you shall wail your fill. Why are you so sure we shall not be disturbed here?

Creusa. The German guards have been sent back to their barracks. There is no one who could come here but the Palace slaves, and they are all afraid to leave their quarters. Even if they came you would be safe with me. Everybody knows Creusa the Emperor's old nurse. Who told you to seek me out as a guide ?

Herod. Chaerea.

Creusa. Don't utter that name. Don't speak of him. It was he that struck the first blow. Did you not know that ?

Herod. I knew nothing till my people came to tell me that the Emperor Caius was dead, and that all was in confusion. When I came here I asked for Chaerea, and it was he that advised your being summoned. Do you know what happened ?

Creusa. Let me whisper it. I fear that man. I have feared him for a long time, and to-day more than ever. I have known Chaerea ever since my mistress Agrippina was brought to bed of my darling Caius. He was with us in the camp on the Rhine. And he it was that carried the baby round to show him to the legions, dressed as a little soldier. My darling ! my darling ! and it was Chaerea who struck him. . . . Chaerea ! who has murdered him ! I can see him now carrying the baby in his arms and holding up his little legs, those dear little dimpled legs, to show the tiny soldier-boots. And the men all laughing and calling after him, " Caligula ! our Little Boots, our Little Boots." And to-day Chaerea has killed him. May he die in torment ! They said that Caius made some jest. Alas ! he made many enemies by

his jests. But Chaerea, who had served him for nearly thirty years, ever since he was born. What cause had Chaerea to hate him? others may have had cause, but not he. Had he not received benefits as well as mockery? And for an idle word. Could he not have had patience? He asked the pass-word, and Caius answered,—your highness knows what words Caius would sometimes give him. And Chaerea drew his sword and cut him down, and the others, who must have been in the plot, struck at him again and again until he died. Again and again, Prince, they struck him, the Divine Caius, their Emperor, they stabbed and struck him till he died. Oh! ye gods! ye gods! What wickedness, what wickedness!

Herod. Who were the others?

Creusa. There was Sabinus certainly. They say two senators, Asprenas and Anteius. But there were others; and some, they say, were killed by the German guard, though they had nothing to do with the murder.

Herod. Had Caius no warning?

Creusa. Too many. Never a day passed without some warning, and that is why he heeded them no more. Only yesterday again there came an oracle from Antium. And then, when he sacrificed at the altar of Augustus in the morning, the blood spurted over him and Asprenas,—Asprenas, who is now dead, they say. Caius laughed at him then, but did not see that his own robe was splashed with blood also. But what did he ever care for warnings and omens? He was mad. My dearest dear, my little one, he was surely mad. The gods

had blinded him, and his wild spirit drove him here and there in spite of danger. But I loved him always. Never had he any but the fondest words for his old nurse. For me he had always a kind greeting. And for Chaerea! Who but Caius would have borne so patiently with the tiresome ways of the old man, and kept him always by his side as tribune of the guards? He would never dismiss Chaerea because of old times,—and Chaerea has killed him.

Herod. So you think your master was mad.

Creusa. I know he was.

Herod. When did you first know that?

Creusa. When Drusilla died. It was then he defied the gods.

Herod. I knew it before then. The Romans blame me, and say that I succeeded in turning a Roman Emperor into the worst of Eastern tyrants. It is not true. I have done my best to save a madman from the result of his madness. I too loved him, as you know, and that is why I am here. I could not save his life, but at least I will save his body from insult,—if I can.

Creusa. How shall we get it away?

Herod. I cannot tell yet. We must find him, and then we will think of some plan. Chaerea will help if necessary. But we will do without his aid, if it is possible. Thaumastor, who was once his servant and is now mine, is at hand, and will help me.

Creusa. Yes, I can trust Thaumastor.

Herod. You do not trust me then?

Creusa. My Lord and Prince, I do trust you. But I am so distraught with grief I hardly know what I say.

Herod. And Caesonia?

Creusa. I had not even remembered her. I last saw her in the Palace, her babe with her. She was faithful to him also. But they would not harm her, they have nothing to fear from her, poor woman.

Herod. You forget the child.

Creusa. Or from the child. It is little more than a babe.

Herod. Even a babe may be an enemy to the men who plotted to kill Caius.

Creusa. Who were they?

Herod. The senate. They blame me for giving ill advice to Caius. Yet if he had followed my advice he would be alive now. How could he be safe while that pestilential body of men existed? A despot is foolish if he leaves alive any single man who can make a rival claim to his power. And here were a hundred rivals. I always told him there would never be peace or good government in Rome until every senator had his throat cut.

Creusa. No, no. Enough blood was shed. You were wrong to counsel him to shed more. And my boy was by nature gentle, until this madness fell upon him.

Herod. It was not with the help of a senate that my grandfather ruled his kingdom, or that I shall rule mine. But what do you know of such matters, my poor Creusa?

Creusa. Little indeed. Though Agrippina often spoke to me of them before she was made prisoner by Tiberius. Agrippina was a clever woman.

Herod. She was married to a fool.

Creusa. Germanicus was worse than a fool. What wonder that with such a father, my poor boy was not always wise.

Herod. You remained with him after his mother's banishment ?

Creusa. I was with him always. While he was in the house of the old Empress Livia, I was still his nearest attendant. And afterwards at his grandmother's, Antonia's, house. I was with him at Capri ; where you saw me, and spoke to me.

Herod. Yes ; I remember you well.

Creusa. And he was a good friend to you, Prince, was he not ? My boy was faithful to his friends. He would have been, oh ! he would have been so good a man had not that madness come on him. You knew him when he was little more than a boy, and you remember what a good and gentle boy he was. He had such a winning nature. And when he was a baby ! Such a sweet little face, nestling against my breast ! My little one ! my little one ! And they have killed him. Stabbed him to death. His dear body lying in his blood, stiff and cold.

Herod. The dawn is breaking. Shall we go forward ?

Creusa. There is light enough. But now, how I dread what the light will show us. My limbs tremble so, I cannot move.

Herod. Come, courage !

Creusa. Here is the turning into the long gallery. The windows are letting in some light already. What is that lying there ? oh, ye merciful ones, have pity ! What is it that lies there ?

Herod. Caesonia, poor woman. Stabbed to the heart, I think. Help me to raise her.

Creusa. Why did I not think of her? Why did I not go to her?

Herod. You could not have saved her.

Creusa. I could have died with her. Why did I not die with my boy, too? But her child; what have they done with her child?

Herod. Look, look here. See what they have done with her child.

Creusa. The brutes! the pitiless monsters! How can men be so wicked.

Herod. The pavement is a lake of blood. And here is Caius himself. My poor friend.

Creusa. My boy! my boy! oh, ye gods, have mercy! My boy! oh woe! oh woe!

Herod. Silence, let me think. We must get his body away. Come, woman, get up. Stand up and help me. We must get away before the light comes. The dawn is breaking, and the day comes . . .

Buon giorno! Signor Commendatore. The Signore is early; the sun is not yet up. He has come to look at his roses. Has he ever seen finer roses than these red creepers? It is a pleasure to work for the Signore, he always knows where to plant; though for that matter everything seems to grow on our Palatine; it is a wonderful soil. I always say that all that people that lived here,—all those Caesars who lived and died here,—have the most beautiful monument in all Rome. Look at those red roses!

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, GLASGOW

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